RHETORIC AND RITUAL IN COLONIAL INDIA

The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852 - 1928

Douglas E. Haynes

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The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852–1928

Douglas E. Haynes

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book belongs to the most traditional of historical subject matters—political history—yet it employs one of the newest of historical methodologies, that of ethnohistory. Implicitly its approach is grounded in an understanding of ethnographic analysis once expressed by a professor of mine in graduate school. "Anthropology," he suggested, "either tries to render the strange familiar or it tries to render the familiar strange." In practice, of course, anthropologists have almost exclusively done the former at the expense of the latter. That is, they have studied social and cultural forms that seem remote to peoples living in "modern" or "Western" societies—tribal social organization, sacral kingship, peasant belief systems, and so on—and they have tried to render these forms intelligible in Western terms. In a sense this is also true of much recent American work on South Asian history, which has drawn very heavily on anthropological models. The American ethnohistorical school has focused on seemingly distant aspects of Indian culture—for instance, the role of caste, "tribe," religion, and ritual—but it has located much of the contemporary significance of these aspects not so much in ageless traditions of the subcontinent as in the impact of assumptions held about India by nineteenth- and twentieth-century British civil servants. The processes involved in the formation of liberal democratic values, by contrast, have not borne such scrutiny, perhaps because "democracy"—so accepted a part of Euro-American culture—lacks the strangeness anthropologists expect in their subject material.

The concern of anthropology with examining symbolic action, that is, with explicating the processes by which human beings construct their understandings of the world, is, however, as applicable to an anal-

ysis of the development of India's liberal representative order as it is to the study of caste, religion, or kinship in South Asia. But such analysis requires the scholar to distance him- or herself very self-consciously from the dominant assumption in Euro-American culture that there is something natural or inevitable about the emergence of liberal democratic values.[1] The discourse of our history textbooks, newspapers, and TV sets suggests that the emergence of democracy is an outgrowth of a universal human drive for freedom (as defined in Western terms); that once a people has been exposed to the ideals of Western liberalism, they will naturally accept these ideals and work to shape their own political systems accordingly. The failure of such ideas to take hold has usually been seen either as a sign of "backwardness"—often the lack of education or economic development is blamed—or as a reflection of repression from above. We rarely consider that liberal democratic constructions of reality may themselves be products of particular kinds of domination. Although I subscribe to democratic principle, I consider it mistaken to believe that Indian democracy has taken shape by some mysterious dynamic resistant to the same kinds of analyses that ethnohistorians have performed for other aspects of cultural change on the subcontinent. In particular, I suggest here that constraints associated with colonialism were as critical to the shaping of a democratic ethos among South Asia's educated elites as was any intrinsic appeal of Western ideas. Indians created their own political culture but did so within a sociopolitical environment that placed serious limits on the sort of culture they might fashion. In effect I try to capture a sort of strangeness involved in the making of India's democracy, a strangeness associated with the peculiar institutions of British colonial rule.

My arrival at the understandings that form the argument of this book has not been an easy one. Having received training at the University of Pennsylvania as an ethnohistorian and having read through the secondary literature published before my departure for India in 1978, I had socialized myself (I can blame no one else) to look for factors that were peculiarly Indian in the culture of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century politics in Surat, the city I had chosen for my research. My confrontation with my sources—municipal records, petitions, newspaper accounts, and other local accounts—was at first perplexing, not because I was being exposed to a world very different from my own, as I expected, but because the language of these materials was familiar, frustratingly familiar. What element of "cultural continuity" could possibly be seen in a statement by an English-educated politician in Surat that those who supported the imposition of a house tax in the city were trying "to dishonour the traditions of the British rule by disregarding vox populi."[2] My perplexity grew to disgruntlement as I plunged into Gujarati-language newspapers and found that

these often seemed to read as translations from English. In the best (worst?) Orientalist tradition, I searched diligently for evidence of public meetings and addresses suffused with religious and caste symbolism. I did not find these until I reached the Gandhian period, near the very end of the years covered in this book. Was there then nothing "Indian" about local politics before this period except at some deeper, unconscious level that I would have to construct through a possibly fanciful act of my imagination? With the shortness of time my fellowship allowed me, I had little chance to take stock.

Stubbornly I kept taking notes, hoping that somehow I could salvage a dissertation from this seemingly chaotic collection of material. The discourse of my sources continued to fascinate me during my closing months in India and upon my return to the United States. Slowly it began to occur to me that local elites had little choice but to write and speak in this familiar language, since often they were addressing—and more important, attempting to persuade—an audience steeped in political idioms very similar to those in which I myself had been socialized. This audience was the British (or more correctly, the Anglo-Indian) rulers of the subcontinent. Perhaps India's colonizers, by their very presence and by virtue of their control over the ultimate reins of power, had effectively imposed the culture of liberal democracy on their subjects.

This initial conclusion of course was overly simple, since it deprived the subjects of my research of any creative role in shaping their history. The opinions elites in Surat expressed in their politics, ultimately leading to assertive calls for national independence, were often not the views that British administrators would have liked them to have. As I attuned myself more and more to their rhetoric and their ritual, I came to recognize that these individuals may have operated within the confines of languages adopted from their rulers, but they did so to accomplish ends that were largely their own and they constantly reinterpreted the meanings of the concepts they employed. Thus, the language of constitutional principle was not a rigid framework predetermining all potential expression but one that allowed a wide variety of expression within its limitations. To sum up the new point at which I arrived, Surat's politicians created a "negotiated version" of principles that had issued originally from the Anglo-Indian ruling group.

This book thus focuses on the initial stages of democracy in the making, or to use a key word employed by the subjects of this study, on a *public* culture in the making.[3] In order to capture the dynamic character of this process, I have focused on a single urban center, that of Surat in western India. The period of the study is from the founding of Surat's municipality in 1852 to the end of the 1920s, after Gandhi's noncooperation movement had expired.

A word about the use of the term *public culture* in this work. I intend here no a priori definition drawn from the social sciences.[4] Rather, my intention is to show how the concept *public* was defined by local leaderships in Surat in the course of their political actions. While the central purpose of the study is to conduct an argument about processes of cultural formation, I have included a great deal of ethnographic detail, usually examples of the rhetoric used by Surtis themselves, in order to give the reader some sense of the language and ritual employed in the everyday politics of India's localities. Much of local politics, I discovered, involved conflicting attempts by elites to construe the meaning of the concept *public* among themselves and in negotiation with the Anglo-Indian rulers. Understanding what local figures meant when they used terms such as *public opinion, the public good,* and *the nation,* it seems to me, is critical to comprehending the development of democratic cultural forms in India.

This book began as a dissertation but has gone through a number of permutations before reaching its present state. I thus have more than the usual number of people and organizations to thank for their contributions to the project. I can mention only some of them here. I would first like to express my appreciation to the American Institute of Indian Studies, which funded my initial research in Surat and Bombay from 1978 to 1980. Later, Dartmouth College provided sabbaticals and a faculty fellowship that freed me to do many of the more recent revisions.

Before the project even began, a number of scholars at the University of Pennsylvania were influential in shaping the approach I have taken here. I would particularly like to thank Tom Kessinger, Barbara Metcalf, and Alan Heston for providing support and much intellectual stimulation when I was a graduate student who needed even more direction than is usually the case. In India, the Centre for Social Studies helped me time and time again during the course of my stay. I would especially like to thank Dr. Ghanshyam Shah (then director of the center), Dr. Dipankar Gupta, and Dr. Punalekar for their friendship and interest in my work. My interviews with residents of Surat were among the most rewarding experiences of my research. I am particularly grateful to Gordhandas Chokhawala, Kunvarji Mehta, and Hafiz Muhammad Golandaz for helping me live, if only briefly, the period about which I was writing. Many librarians and directors of archives facilitated my research. My book would have not been possible if not for the help of Shri Parmar, City Engineer of Surat City Municipality, and Shri Reshamwala, owner of the *Gujarat Mitra,* for allowing me use of the valuable collections under their supervision. Ami Vyas and Amar Sirwani worked as research assistants during parts of my stay in India. Finally, my life was enriched greatly by the friendships of Paul Gon-

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Catharine K. Haynes, my mother, read several chapters and offered numerous suggestions on my prose and logic. Nien Lin Xie, my wife, has been indispensable to the work's completion in too many ways to enumerate here. Without her, I might have survived writing this book, but the costs would have been great. I dedicate the book to her and to Tommy.

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PART ONE

Colonial Domination and the Culture of Politics

Every colonized people . . . finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing country; that is, with the culture of the mother country.

FRANTZ FANON

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ONE

Introduction

The rise of nationalism, the development of self-governing institutions, the expansion of anticolonial protest, the emergence of intense ethnic and religious conflicts—these have been the "grand" themes in the historiography of colonial societies.[1] The centrality of these themes in the writing of Asian and African history suggests that the colonial experience everywhere involved great changes in indigenous cultures of politics. Under the domination of European imperialism, the colonized altered their perceptions of the political world in fundamental ways, modifying their notions of authority, reformulating their conceptions of justice, and often forging new identities.

For students of global history, India has often served as a paradigm for understanding political change under colonial rule. The largest contemporary nation of Asia or Africa to have undergone colonial rule, it was the first to develop a "modern" nationalist organization: the Indian National Congress, founded in 1885. India had a rich history of popular protest against imperialism, culminating in the three giant campaigns led by Mahatma Gandhi between the 1920s and the 1940s. It also had a very long history of development in self-governing institutions, beginning with local municipalities and district local boards introduced by British civil servants after the mid–nineteenth century, and leading up to the creation of a parliamentary government in 1947. Accompanying the rise of nationalism and the emergence of India's liberal representative system was a process that has always been less positively evaluated in historical writings: the emergence of communal conflicts, particularly between Hindus and Muslims. As is well known, the intensification of religious communalism ultimately led to the division of British India into the separate countries of India and Pakistan,

as well as to the tragic events of 1946–48, when hundreds of thousands of South Asians lost their lives in bloody rioting.

Until the last ten years, it was these processes—the growth of nationalism, of representative forms of self-government, and of communalism—that most preoccupied historians of late colonial South Asia. Central to their concerns was the chief subject of this book: the incorporation of nationalist, democratic, and communalist concepts into the political values of educated Indians. The outlines of this story are fairly well known. During the nineteenth century, a small group of men, anxious to prove their worth to their British rulers but also intent on questioning their rulers' policies, began to appropriate the notions of "nationalism," "representative government," and (later) "socialism," all principles originating in the political discourse of Western Europe. The "English-educated elite" assumed command over the top rungs of the Indian National Congress from its beginnings, guiding the country in the decolonization process, giving shape to its constitution, and setting the general contours of state ideology. In the period following independence, the continued commitment of this elite to liberal, representative, and nationalist institutions enabled India's democracy to withstand the increasingly intense conflicts between communities organized around region, religion, and caste.

Today some scholars apparently consider these issues exhausted and see little point in raising them again. They have turned to the study of social and economic structure and, more recently, of popular resistance. A few, by dismissing the traditional questions of political historiography as "elitist," have even attempted to strip these concerns of much of their legitimacy.[2] Yet many of the same historians would recognize that the older models that used to explain the emergence of India's liberal representative values have serious shortcomings. And they would also acknowledge that an understanding of this process is necessary in order to appreciate the character of the contemporary political order, especially the reasons it has failed to meet the needs of India's underclasses.

This study turns again to the historical examination of the development of India's liberal political system and of the liberal, democratic value system of its English-educated elite by focusing on a single urban center, the city of Surat in western India. The questions it asks are familiar to Indian historians. Why did Indian elites appropriate liberal and national concepts during late colonial rule? Why did communal identities and conceptions of justice crystallize and intensify at the same time as the emergence of democratic discourse? Why did discussion and debate in the central arenas of politics become confined to these two idioms—the liberal-democratic and the communal? Perhaps most

important, how did the language of democracy, despite its seeming advocacy of the equality and rights of the underclasses, serve to exclude these classes from full-fledged participation in forging India's contemporary polity?

While many of the questions I examine here are traditional ones, the approach I use to examine them is not. Rather than draw upon the standard tools of political history, I wish here to apply the methodology of ethnohistory. The study borrows from anthropology the concern with the construction of cultural meaning, the process by which human beings create and reproduce their understandings of the world in the course of social action. In the pages that follow, I explore the symbolic behavior—the rhetoric and the ritual—of leaderships in Surat as they interacted with their political overlords. The focus on politics as symbolic action and discursive practice will allow me to question interpretative models that suggest that the entry of democratic values into the language of elite politics was an outgrowth of forces external to the political process, such as "westernization," "modernization," and the "emergence of capitalism." Instead, I argue that day-to-day struggles for power and justice under colonial domination were themselves the most significant engines of cultural change.

This study departs from most existing political history in another way, also influenced by anthropological approaches. While most works touching upon questions of political ideology in India explore either national-level organizations or leaders of national, or at least regional, prominence, often during a rather short period, I choose to examine a specific locality over a long time. For those familiar with the history of Indian politics, the choice of Surat as a subject for this inquiry may seem an especially odd one for a work that claims to describe a dynamic characteristic of large areas of the subcontinent. The city and the region surrounding it produced no leaders of national stature until the rise of Morarji Desai, a native of the southern Gujarat region (and later prime minister of India), during the 1930s. With the exception of the famous Indian National Congress meetings of 1907, an event that will receive little attention in this work, Surat has never been especially well known for its contributions to the nationalist struggle or the history of communalism. Why not, one might ask (and, indeed, I have been asked), concentrate instead on national-level actors operating in national arenas? The answer is that an analysis of cultural processes and ideological change can benefit as much from a circumscribed focus as, say, the study of factional conflict or peasant unrest. If we are to leave behind the notion that change is the inexorable result of anonymous historical forces and view culture instead as a product of specific men and women in specific historical environments, constantly construing

the meanings of their social actions as they seek power and struggle for justice, then it is only through studies concentrating on particular places or groups that we can capture these processes. The micro approach of the ethnohistorian becomes an invaluable tool for reconstructing the patterns of everyday encounter between local elites and their colonial rulers that helped give shape to the contemporary Indian culture of politics.

Although the initial choice of Surat was almost arbitrary, in retrospect it seems particularly fortunate. The city's history is relatively well documented as early as the seventeenth century, which makes it possible to examine the emergence of liberal representative principle over a much longer history of symbolic interaction between city dwellers and their political overlords. Surat also had some of the social diversity characteristic of Indian society as a whole. The broad patterns of its political development intersect well with themes that historians have emphasized in more general works, such as the growth of Gandhian nationalism and the emergence of religious communalism. This is, of course, not to say that Surat was a typical city. Indeed, no single place could be typical, for each had its own social configurations, its own subcultural traditions, and its own historical experiences under colonialism. But by focusing on a particular locale like Surat, we can hope to understand the general character of the processes by which the colonized in Asia and Africa accommodated themselves culturally to political domination by European rulers. Though concentrating on a single city, this analysis will allow a questioning of existing models of change in the culture of politics and a positing of an alternative approach that should prove testable elsewhère in India and the colonized world.

MODELS OF CHANGE IN INDIAN POLITICAL CULTURE

Existing approaches to the development of India's liberal polity, contemporary historians tend to agree, all have significant limitations. Yet in recent years few new alternatives have arisen to replace the old. Though most historians consciously reject paradigms that stress English education, the emergence of capitalism, or colonial constitutional reform as the key variable responsible for the appropriation of democratic values and rhetoric by Indian elites, many are forced to resort to these same models as shorthand when they deal in their writings and classroom expositions with change in political culture. Even more critical, the absence of explicit alternatives to the existing models has meant that older, often culture-bound, conceptions of political change remain entrenched in popular understandings of Asian and African history, particularly in the West. The need for an approach that can challenge

ethnocentric or empirically inadequate interpretations is self-evident to anyone who teaches Indian history. The purpose of addressing these models thus is not to resurrect some straw men whose views can then easily be dismissed, or to deny the value of works of continuing importance at both empirical and interpretative levels. Rather, it is to make explicit the paradigms that underlie thinking about the once-colonized world in Euro-American culture so that the process of unlearning these paradigms can be made more conscious.

The question of why Indian elites developed commitments to liberal political principle has most commonly been associated with approaches stressing the notions of westernization and modernization. Two decades ago, these two approaches to change were dominant among Western academics; today they still pervade popular conceptions of non-Western history. Each evoked at least implicitly the image of a superior civilization—the "West" or "modernity"—confronting a backward, static, and "traditional" society and of the colonized either absorbing foreign values or reacting against them. The concept of westernization suggested that those who came in contact with Western values through English-language education abandoned traditional beliefs largely because they had been exposed to these values.[3] Modernization theorists claimed to escape from these overtly ethnocentric judgments by accepting that every society may develop its own path to the acquisition of certain "modern" traits, such as "rationality," "democracy," "nationalism," "achievement orientation," "humanitarianism," and "secularism."[4] But since these traits were usually evaluated positively and since they were always considered to be characteristic of European and American societies and not originally of the societies subjected to colonialism, modernization theory too was often imbued with assumptions of Western cultural superiority. Moreover, the causal logic in many modernization studies was often unclear; sometimes the diffusion of a set of modern traits seemed to occur through some natural and inexorable process that was never quite delineated. Studies that did provide historical explanation often pointed to Western intellectual forces—education, missionary activity, or the ideas of individual colonial officers—as the key factors stimulating change.[5]

Such criticism is not meant to suggest that Western education and ideas were unimportant formative influences. Indeed, since the proponents of liberal democratic ideals in India were all highly educated, the role of English schooling must be acknowledged. It was in their schools and colleges that many members of the Indian elite were exposed to European political traditions, to law, and to parliamentary procedures that became so critical to their politics. The problem is that westernization and modernization alone are rather limited explanations for value

shifts. If one relaxes the assumption of Western superiority inherent in these concepts, one is often left with the conclusion that culture contact inevitably produces cultural change. Only by taking into account the context of power in educational institutions and in the larger colonial world of which these institutions were part is it possible to understand why English education was such a transformative experience in India; learning thus must be considered a political process shaped by the character of domination. But once this is accepted, education loses its privileged place as a site of cultural change. Other political arenas, such as those examined in this work, become equally significant.

Finally, those who adopted the academic discourse of westernization and modernization often explicitly or implicitly regarded the acceptance of nationalist and democratic values as part of an onward march of history that derived from universal human drives for "freedom." In essence these approaches were rooted in an evolutionary perspective that saw all societies as moving naturally, though perhaps unevenly, toward convergence with certain Euro-American norms. In practice each model thus served, though often unconsciously, to bolster the hegemony of the West long after the political structures of colonialism had been dismantled.[6]

Sociological approaches to the development of political change, particularly what one might call the classical Marxian approach, have had a history nearly as long as that of Westernization and modernization.[7] These approaches, too, located the source of cultural change in Europe. But rather than looking to Western education as the chief agent of cultural change, sociological explanations suggested that the growth of nationalist and democratic values stemmed from radical shifts in the economy and society associated with colonial rule. Commercialization, the growth of private property, and the development of the British legal order fundamentally transformed Indian society, which had previously been based on "precapitalist" or "feudal" relations. The classes which arose from such processes readily adopted liberal political values when these met their economic and political interests.[8]

Because the work of classical Marxians located the mechanism of change in the larger society rather than in the transmission of ideas, it escaped the assumption of Western cultural superiority. No doubt for this reason the approach proved far more attractive than modernization or westernization to intellectuals in India. Empirically, however, the sociological interpretation proved problematic. Some areas of India undoubtedly underwent major social transformations during the nineteenth century. But recent scholarship, including much work by revisionist Marxist scholars, has raised significant doubt about whether similar structural changes took place everywhere during this period.[9] Yet

despite the unevenness of socioeconomic change, commitments to liberal political values emerged almost uniformly in urban South Asia during the later nineteenth century. These inconsistencies led a number of more recent Marxist historians to question whether there was any one-to-one relationship between the class status of Indian political leaders and their ideologies. Bipan Chandra, in his seminal study of economic nationalism, has argued that nationalist intellectuals of the late nineteenth century "showed a high degree of altruism in proposing policies which went against the narrow interests of that section of society to which most of them belonged." While middle class in their economic position, he asserts, the nationalists were capitalist in outlook.[10] But though such revisionist alternatives to the classical models have corrected the tendency to emphasize a mechanical correlation between ideological developments and social structure, they have generally not suggested any alternative mechanism of cultural change. In the studies of Chandra and others, class analysis has become more a tool of description than a theory of causation; that is, these works show simply that certain "classes" adopted certain ideological positions. Unfortunately, in dismissing overly deterministic Marxian interpretations without positing alternatives, the revisionists by default often lead us back to explanations based upon the Indian response to Western cultural influences.

Finally, both the sociological approach and much revisionist work tended to rest on assumptions about change in society and culture no less teleological than those of westernization and modernization. These studies, too, tended to view colonized societies as moving steadily toward the adoption of nationalism, democracy, and sometimes socialism by evolutionary processes that either must or should take place. Those few recent studies that escape these kinds of assumptions and that stress instead the importance of colonial domination to the adoption of twentieth-century values and norms rarely have explored how domination accomplishes these ends.[11]

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, historians working on elite politics turned away from the question of how Western notions became entrenched in the Indian culture of politics. Some looked at the ways nationalist leaders drew upon regional and religious symbolism in attempts to mobilize followers; others examined the specific social and economic interests underlying the behavior of Indian politicians in their regions and localities.[12] Collectively this work called into question the utility of viewing liberal or bourgeois ideology as the sole motive force in Indian politics, pointing both to the importance of "neo-traditional" values and the preoccupations of local factional groupings with status, wealth, and power. In the process, however, they tended to

tilt scholarship toward recognition of continuity and away from consideration of change.

The most important and cohesive approach to develop in political history during the last two decades was that of the Cambridge "school," a group of historians led by Anil Seal at Cambridge University.[13] Its members—though less united than the label "school" might suggest—did offer some common understandings of the development of liberal political institutions on the subcontinent, and all of them tended to exclude any analysis of the dynamics of cultural and ideological change from their work. The Cambridge historians saw the emergence of public and national politics largely as an accommodation of Indian elites to the changing structure of the Raj, particularly to the growing importance of the institutions of self-government established by the colonial rulers. Indian politicians entered these institutions often carrying with them the preexisting concerns and conflicts of powerful local magnates. They also formed political associations to bring pressure on these institutions from outside, forging new linkages between localities and creating a "structure of their own which could match the administrative and representative structures of the Raj." The most significant of the new public organizations was the Indian National Congress.[14]

Like others writing at the time, the Cambridge historians decisively moved away from the teleological assumptions of both the westernization-modernization and Marxian approaches. But this movement came at the cost of any serious consideration of change in the culture of politics. Seal, perhaps the most cynical among the Cambridge scholars, downplayed ideology altogether, insisting that what really determined political behavior was "the race for influence, status and resources." Democratic discourse merely masked the true concerns of dominant groups in India. There was a "palpable gap," he stated, "between what politicians claimed to represent and what they really stood for."[15] Indians, playing the rules of a colonially constructed game, dressed themselves in the guise of organizational forms that their rulers would recognize for the purpose of advancing their own economic and political interests. The various studies by members of the Cambridge group suggested that at the local level Indians remained organized largely around traditional factions (and to a lesser extent around religious groupings) as they involved themselves in new forms of political organization. The way in which notions of authority, identity, and justice were reformulated and rethought as Indians participated in the new arenas of politics was a marginal concern of the Cambridge historians.

Since the mid-1970s, when most of the works associated with the Cambridge school were published, there have been considerable developments in the historiography of India, most notably in examining un-

derclass movements and resistance. Historians have generally set aside issues of elite politics and the development of representative institutions and democratic values. But in doing so they have left most scholars seriously dissatisfied with the existing models to explain the older questions.

HEGEMONY AND CULTURE: AN ETHNOHISTORICAL APPROACH

While all the major historical models point to important factors that must be considered in any work on the emergence of democratic discourse, each has significant limitations. In this study I acknowledge the importance of education but view English-language schooling as a necessary rather than a sufficient explanatory factor for the formation of liberal democratic consciousness. I accept a relationship between socioeconomic position and cultural values—although not a deterministic one—but see no sufficient structural transformation in social relations in Surat City to account for the shifts in the culture of local politics during the late colonial period. I depart from any teleology which would view liberal democratic outlooks as an inevitable outgrowth of inexorable historical processes. And while I emphasize the critical importance of colonial institutional structures and of local factional struggles, I stress that real changes in consciousness did take place and that the rhetoric of local politicians must be taken seriously. Indeed, I argue that it was through their rhetorical and ritual actions that Surti elites constituted the emergent public culture of the late nineteenth century.

While this work also addresses the "grand" questions of Indian political history, it argues that the main factor conditioning the construction of political ideology and culture was the unequal power relationship between the colonial rulers and the colonized. Public culture in Surat, I suggest, was a product of British rule and, more important, of the efforts and struggles of local elites to create a place for themselves within the colonial order. Indigenous politicians shaped their values and self-images in reference to political languages derived from their rulers' culture because these languages carried a special persuasive power in the context of British colonial domination, particularly in arenas of politics influenced by the new institutions of self-government. As local elites sought to influence their rulers and their relation with their political overlords, they made recourse to a vocabulary and symbols that had meaning to their rulers. In carving out niches for themselves within the Raj, competing with each other for power, striving for justice, and even criticizing colonial rule, they developed commitments to

political principles whose origins ultimately were alien. Thus, in the arenas civil administrators considered most critical, discussion and debate became confined within Anglo-Indian political idioms. The hegemony of these idioms was so strong that all attempts to construct alternative political discourses of power were eventually overwhelmed. The principle of public representation and its seeming antithesis—communal representation—both became established through the same processes, that is, the efforts of local leaders to interpret and reinterpret borrowed political conceptions in the everyday struggles of local politics.

These arguments owe a debt to two different intellectual sources, neither of which has been regularly applied to the development of nationalism and democracy in India. The first is those scholars who form what might be called the American ethnohistorical school of Indian history. This group, led by such figures as Bernard Cohn, Arjun Appadurai, Nicholas Dirks, Lucy Caroll, and Richard Fox, has focused on British efforts to comprehend and categorize Indian society and culture and on the role of Indians in constructing their own cultures, in part by resorting to their rulers' own political idioms.[16] In pointing to colonial institutions such as the courts, the army, and imperial ritual as critical sites of cultural production and reproduction, members of this school have questioned whether nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian commitments to tribe, caste, and religion can be seen merely as reflections of traditional values. Many of these identities, they have insisted, reflect as much a cultural accommodation of Indians to colonial understandings of their society as an ethos rooted in precolonial principles and loyalties.

To date, the work of the ethnohistorians has concentrated on subjects which fall to a certain extent within the traditional purview of anthropology. That is, they have examined phenomena which appear unfamiliar, perhaps strange and exotic, to Westerners: the role of caste and tribe, of religious institutions and religious identities, and of imperial ritual. Logically, however, their method is equally valid for understanding cultural forms that have been more central to the concerns of political historians. Like caste, tribe, and religion, the notions of the people, the public good, democracy, and nationhood were by no means natural ones but were culturally constructed by Indian elites in their day-to-day politics under the British Raj. Just as ethnohistory challenges the notion of an unchanging Indian culture when it is applied to questions of religious and caste identity, it can also be called upon to question approaches that have viewed liberal democratic forms in India as a product of inevitable evolutionary processes. It suggests instead the great importance of human symbolic action in colonial arenas such as

the schools, courts, municipalities, and provincial assemblies to the development of public culture.

The second source of inspiration for this study is the concept of a "cultural hegemony" exerted by the dominant classes within a society, a notion first developed in the work of the Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci but since explicated and enriched by a wide range of recent scholarship.[17] In this case, the dominant group to be analyzed is British India's civil elite, and the subordinate groups, the local leaderships or elites of Surat (I will deal with the real underclasses of the city in a moment). By constructing powerful institutional structures in which the elites of Surat felt compelled to operate, I argue, colonial rulers successfully forged a loose hegemony over certain arenas of politics in the city. Local leaderships, working within these structures, continuously resorted to British political models as they gave meaning to their actions. Commitments to ethnic identities, to democracy, and to nationalism, commitments that characterize the culture of politics in India today, are all to a great extent by-products of a colonial domination that stretched into the ideological sphere. As Ashis Nandy has suggested, British colonialism was not merely a matter of the conquest of territory and the appropriation of Indian economic resources; it also involved the "colonization of minds."[18]

The notion of hegemony, unfortunately, often conjures up an image of a dominant group simply imposing its thinking upon all members of a society through the conscious engineering of culture. When the term is used in this way, subordinate groups appear deprived of any role whatsoever in shaping their own cultural values. They are manipulated into adopting a "false consciousness" that inhibits them from transforming their position of social and economic subordination. To a certain extent, sections in Gramsci's writings suggest just such an interpretation. Much recent work, however, has contended that Gramsci in other passages offers a more complex understanding of hegemony, one that allocates to the dominated a creative part in fashioning their own culture. I do not wish to engage in a debate over whose interpretation of Gramsci is right, an exercise that is probably futile given the inconsistencies in his writings. But I do think that the more complex understanding of hegemony developed in recent scholarship can provide a useful theoretical perspective, whether or not it reflects a "correct" reading of Gramsci. With certain adjustments prompted by this scholarship, the notion of hegemony can be applied to processes of cultural formation in colonial contexts.

First of all, the implication that subordinate groups have a false consciousness should be dropped. To use this term immediately privileges

the revolutionary's definition of what is important at the expense of the subordinate group's own principles. Ideologies and values that stop short of being revolutionary need not be "false"; they may still serve very real interests of the subordinated. Reformist attitudes and beliefs, for instance, may in fact reflect a disposition to avoid risk that seems far more "rational" given the realities of power than more radical alternatives.[19] Similarly, a priority given to family, community, or religion rather than to the reconstruction of the larger polity may reflect important psychic and social needs of a worker or peasant. But dismissing the bogey of false consciousness need not lead to the overthrow of the hegemonic model; hegemony simply requires that the subordinate be accomplices in perpetuating the symbolic structures that uphold existing inequalities.[20]

The idea of hegemony can also be strengthened by recognizing that subordinate groupings can play an active part in negotiating the character of the dominant value system. In Surat the concept of a *negotiated* version of ruling-class ideology acknowledges the creative role of local elites in constructing their own cultural forms.[21] Though political discourse generally operated within the limits of alien political idioms, indigenous figures were constantly reshaping the meaning of appropriated concepts as they attempted to create places for themselves within the colonial order and came into conflict with other elites. Politics were an important battleground in which a wide variety of actors, Indian and British, contended with each other in construing meanings of the key symbols and vocabulary of public discourse. Individual actors could be selective in their choice of concepts from this discourse. Often they reinterpreted notions drawn from outside the subcontinent in light of personal and group preoccupations, their needs in specific situations, and their sometimes idiosyncratic understandings of British conceptions. Thus, eventually, alien political models were rendered Indian by the Indians who used them. And (though not a major concern of this study) the construction of meanings by South Asians in turn influenced the understandings of the British themselves. While there was no homogenization of the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized, each affected the other through a process of mutual interaction.

Projecting the notion of negotiation onto that of hegemony also allows us to understand how the outcomes of cultural domination could be multiple. In Surat no uniform political culture took shape in the civic arena. Not only did different individuals who came into conflict with each other offer competitive cultural constructions, but, in keeping with the diversity of Surat, there was also considerable subcultural variation associated with different groupings in the city. Leaders in various religious collectivities were often involved in parallel but distinct

processes of negotiating their culture with the rulers. Different elites selected different words and different colonial models from a larger potential repertoire. In general, only Hindu elites claimed to act as representatives of an undifferentiated local public; in contrast, Muslim and Parsi elites fashioned roles as leaders of religious minorities, often denying the existence of such a public. Both forms of identity, however, were in part negotiated versions of colonial political notions.

A final strengthening of the Gramscian model stems from recognizing the *limited* character of the hegemony—its failure to penetrate many areas of indigenous culture. In Surat the hegemony of colonialism was restricted primarily to a very narrow arena of politics—what might be called the *civic* arena. There it acted to confine political discussion within the limits of public and communal principles. Yet for the majority of Surat's city dwellers, most important decisions were made outside this domain. There, in the city's *inner* political arenas—particularly those of kinship groups and larger descent-based communities—residents conducted their politics in idioms of precolonial origin, ones that stressed such values as the importance of social reputation and duty to family, caste, neighborhood, or religious grouping. The principle of loyalty to the city's various social communities could inform even small-scale resistance to colonial purposes—for instance, in the form of corruption, nepotism, evasion of taxes, and noncompliance with municipal regulations. It did not, however, emerge into a full-blown "counterhegemony," into a language that would have directly contradicted colonial and liberal democratic assumptions.[22]

The consequence of the limited character of hegemony was that for the city's underclasses the politics of the civic arena were governed by principles and lines of debate that were baffling, to say the least. Nonelites had to rely upon symbolic specialists to mediate between themselves and the civic domain; they could not participate in the public arena directly. They lacked the conceptual apparatus to challenge colonial hegemony. During the noncooperation era, Gandhi's followers attempted to develop a language that both countered hegemonic assumptions and struck responsive chords in indigenous culture. But those efforts failed to institutionalize themselves in political structures comparable to those constructed by the Raj. As a result local politics reverted to a situation where "bilingual" politicians acted on behalf of the city's subordinate groups, excluding these groups from direct participation in the civic arena.[23] The organization of local politics into vertical factions owes much to the dependence of most Surtis on the symbolic specialists who participated in public culture. Thus, within the civic arena, the dominant discourse was challenged but eventually not replaced. Outside the civic arena, it diffused only slowly.

Thus, the notion of a limited and negotiated hegemony offers a conceptual alternative to approaches that currently imbue popular understandings of cultural change in the "Third World." But is it really possible to test the validity of Gramscian propositions in colonial contexts? In the following chapter, I argue that such a testing is indeed possible. The key, I suggest, is to turn to the languages of day-to-day politics.

TWO

Colonialism, Language, and Politics

In 1889, Mir Gulam Baba Khan, head of the Nawab of Surat family, resigned his position as president of Surat Municipality. The nawab's relinquishment of his office came after only one year as president, a period in which he had failed to bring the intense factional wrangling in the council under control. With his resignation came the question of how to replace him. Should the provincial government appoint another "nonofficial" Indian, that is, a councillor who did not come from the ranks of the colonial administration? Or should the district collector, the leading British official in Surat, assume the office? The question was of great constitutional significance. Gulam Baba Khan had been Surat's first nonofficial president; he had also been only the second Indian to hold the position.[1] Appointment of a British officer thus would run counter to the public commitment of the government of India to the gradual devolution of authority to Indians. Nevertheless, provincial officials recommended that the district collector be confirmed as president, reasoning that there was no "suitable nonofficial available" and that the previous year's record of inefficiency and factionalism had proved that the Surtis were not yet capable of managing their own affairs. "The city of Surat," wrote one provincial officer, "can not regard this suggestion as an unduly precipitate or hasty one. All that was possible has been done by Government and their officers to uphold the existing constitution here."[2]

Not surprisingly, the government's decision provoked considerable local outcry, most notably from the Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha (Association for the Promotion of the People's Welfare). Claiming to represent "the people of Surat," the association filed a number of petitions to the provincial administration in Bombay in an attempt to block the collector from assuming the municipal presidency. These petitions openly

questioned the logic of a step that ran against the current of "progress" (i.e., the steady process of granting greater authority to Indians). "The Government," ran one objection, "pledged themselves to apply the provisions of the Bombay District Municipal Amendment Act of 1884 in a *fair* and *liberal* spirit and our Sabha and the people of our city accepted these assurances with perfect confidence." "The very nomination of the Collector as President of our Municipality," went another, "is a retrograde step and deals a death blow to the scheme of Local Self-Government in our city."[3]

Rather than warrant a circumscription of local power, the secretaries of the Sabha insisted, Surat's record on civic questions entitled its citizens to ask for a further extension of self-governing privileges. In one petition, they claimed that "our city has made substantial progress and our citizens have been taking an increasing interest in Local Self-Government, and have shown sufficient qualifications and capacities for the same." They argued that the government's view of the local council as being negligent in its performance of public duties was mistaken: "Our municipality has earnestly tried their utmost to give practical shape to several of the most costly but important sanitary improvements recently recommended by Government, keeping at the same time a strict eye to their own legal responsibilities and to the convenience and feelings of the people." The secretaries suggested the names of a number of persons, "all intelligent, capable and respectable," who they felt would make good presidents. "The ability of two of them," the secretaries pointed out, "have been publicly recognized by Government by conferring upon them the title of Rao Bahadur." In fact, they suggested, Surat's council should be granted the privilege of *electing* its own president, a privilege it had never previously had: "Our city has proven itself worthy of enjoying this right."[4]

The district and provincial governments tried to counter these contentions in a series of intragovernment memoranda. Officials acknowledged that appointing a British officer to the presidency was a "somewhat backward step" but argued that the troubles in the council left them no other choice. The Commissioner of the Northern Division wrote that "no real work has been done" over the course of the previous year, that members of the municipality had obstructed essential sanitary projects by raising "unfounded" legal questions, and that many issues had been referred to subcommittees, where they would sit for months without serious consideration.[5] Included in the correspondence surveyed in reviewing the matter was an earlier letter from Surat's assistant collector, who had argued that the difficulties of the president in controlling debates "arises unquestionably almost wholly from the fact that the majority of the members are lacking in manners, temper, or intelligence."[6]

The civil servants also challenged the claim of the Sabha to represent the people of Surat on this or any other issue. "As far as I am able to ascertain," wrote the commissioner, flippantly dismissing the Sabha's assertions, "the measure [of appointing the collector as president] will not be unpopular."[7] Administrators referred to earlier evaluations of the Sabha which had questioned the representativeness of the organization: "The Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha does not seem to rank among its members any influential persons"; "The Sabha carries no weight in the city and the more influential townspeople laugh at its doings. . . . The leading spirits of the so-called association [are a] coterie of Vakils and schoolboys . . . of the Mission High School"; "The assertion . . . that the Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha represents the people of Surat is erroneous and misleading. The members represent the citizens of Surat to about the same extent as . . . three tailors of Tooly [?] Street represented the 'people of England.' "[8] Thus, to the administrators of the Bombay presidency, the call for greater self-governing powers was the work of a few troublemakers, not a demand issuing from the citizenry or its "natural" leaders. With little further debate, the government quickly approved the appointment of the collector as president.

Such were the day-to-day conflicts of civic politics in late nineteenth-century South Asia. Episodes like this are familiar ones in the literature on urban India. Most commonly historians have viewed those conflicts as reflecting the efforts of educated politicians to assert their rights as Indians against an oppressive colonial government and the counterattempts by agents of the British Raj to restrict the freedoms of its South Asian subjects. Such perspectives—which clearly have a certain legitimacy—implicitly place each event in a larger history marking India's march toward independence and democracy. The episode becomes a chapter in the growth of Indian opposition to colonial rule and the unfolding of Indian self-consciousness.

But for historical analysis to stop at this point is to miss the ideological and discursive constraints under which local politicians operated and the common assumptions implicit in the arguments of both the rulers and the ruled. In this case, the members of the Sabha remained within a constitutional discourse regarded by the British as familiar and legitimate even as they opposed a specific ruling of the colonial government. Both sides in the debate had similar notions about the nature of authority and justice. Both sets of actors regarded the will of "the people"—if properly represented—to be the rightful arbiter of the conflict. Both accepted the "progress" of self-government to be an ideal worth pursuing. Both conceded that the allocation of authority to Indians needed to be tempered by consideration of "the public good." Devolution could proceed only when the citizens of Surat had proved they were "ready" for it, and the proof of this readiness rested in the perfor-

mance of the municipality. Self-governing powers were to be granted to Indians only gradually and then only to those capable of using their powers wisely. Both parties agreed that the leaders of civic politics needed to be "intelligent," "respectable" men.

Within the limits of this discourse, of course, there were very real disputes. The notions of "the people," "representation," "progress," the "public good," "intelligence," and "respectability" were ambiguous ones, open to a certain degree of interpretation. The Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha insisted that men who were organized in public associations and who were able to express "educated" opinions about public matters were the true representatives of the people. Colonial officials, on the other hand, felt that persons of substantial local influence, implicitly the "natural," hereditary leaders of the city's four major religious communities, were the rightful representatives of the citizenry. In the absence of any clear sign about how the larger population of the city felt about this issue, neither group's claims were indisputable. Clearly there were some important differences over the sociological principles that should determine representativeness, though each conception was strongly elitist.

Similarly, the progress the city had demonstrated in its capacity for self-government was to a certain extent open to debate. In the minds of the Sabha's membership, the citizens of Surat and the municipal councillors had regularly demonstrated their concern for promoting the public good and needed to be rewarded with greater self-governing powers. Any shortcoming of the councillors in approving measures recommended by the government stemmed only from their serious concern with maintaining "a strict eye to their own legal responsibilities and to the convenience and feelings of the people"; in other words, there were very legitimate reasons for the council's hesitancy in adopting certain measures. Government officers, on the other hand, viewed the councillors as continually obstructing sanitary and other "improvements" through endless wrangling, deliberate foot-dragging in subcommittees, and raising unnecessary legal objections. All this served as evidence that the Surtis were not prepared for greater control of their local government.

This ambiguity in the vocabulary of civic politics, however, does not negate the fact that the use of public discourse placed serious limitations on its users. The idea of openly challenging the preoccupation with progress, with all its ethnocentric assumptions about what were appropriate patterns of cultural change, for instance, did not occur to any participant in the conflict. Nor did anyone question the notion that the people needed to be represented by elite males with special public qualifications, a notion that set clear limits on the extent and nature of

popular participation in the civic arena. No one seems to have considered the possibility that the Surtis were capable of governing themselves and that the pace of devolution need not be regulated by colonial decisions about the citizenry's civic abilities. Finally, the members of the Sabha did not entertain the idea of carrying on their protests outside constitutional channels. All these thoughts were unthinkable—or at least unmentionable—in late nineteenth-century civic politics. Implicit in the position of both sides was an evolutionary logic that saw Britain as more "advanced" than India on a scale of progress and that regarded the British rulers as having a consciousness superior to that of Indians, qualifications that entitled the civil servants to make the final decisions on constitutional matters and, ultimately, to rule the subcontinent.

To suggest that certain kinds of views were kept out of public discussion is not merely to judge Surti elites of the nineteenth century by the standards of later nationalists or by late twentieth-century notions of liberation. Deeper in the city at this very time were people whose consciousnesses were not informed by the categories of improvement, progress, the people, or representation. To the many local residents who did not accept the germ theory of disease causation, for instance, it must have appeared strange and unreasonable that the council presumed the authority to tax residents in order to pay for costly sanitary reforms or to define the areas where sanitary works were constructed as "public space." Evidence of a contradictory consciousness that was not fully articulated in the civic arena can indeed be found in the actions of the municipal councillors themselves, who obstructed the enactment of municipal reforms that British civil servants had proposed by raising legal issues, repeatedly referring matters to subcommittees, and quarrelling over procedures in municipal meetings. To a certain extent, these behaviors reflected the need of councillors to maintain their positions among indigenous groups opposed to higher taxes and more rigorous public regulations, as well as personal worries about how these measures could affect their own lives. Publicly, however, the councillors never questioned the desirability of the larger goal of urban progress. Nor is it likely that they perceived their delaying actions in the council as a form of defiance. Political discussion remained confined within the limits of appropriate discourse.

As long as councillors and petitioners wished to influence British officials and the affairs of the civic arena, it was unlikely that they would operate outside the critical vocabulary of this arena or give voice to principles contrary to the arena's orthodoxies. To do so was to invite being categorized as "corrupt," "backward-looking," "dangerous," or perhaps even "mad" by those who controlled the decision-making pro-

cess and who allocated authority and status in public politics.[9] Colonial rule and the politics of the municipality had created a series of constraints, a set of conventions and assumptions, to which local elites needed to adhere if they wished to be heard. In the civic arena, where decisions were made on most matters critical to the colonial rulers, indigenous actors gave meaning to their political actions entirely in terms drawn from the vocabularies or ideologies of their rulers, though they constantly attempted to interpret and negotiate the meanings of the words and principles they used in specific contexts. But the larger population of the city, by virtue of its inability to express itself and think in these critical idioms, was excluded from the civic arena. It is this situation which I view as evidence of a colonial hegemony that was both negotiated and limited.

COLONIALISM AND THE RHETORIC OF POLITICS

While many more important conflicts have occurred in India and elsewhere in the colonial world, the debate over Surat's municipal presidency illustrates two points about the role of the idioms, or languages, of politics that are of general significance. First, language tends to define the bounds of potential debate and conflict. Specific kinds of political discourse have built-in assumptions about the nature of power and justice. Language furnishes conventions which govern the performance of political acts; it supplies the categories, grammar, and principles through which political assertions are articulated and perceived; it provides yardsticks by which claims to authority and justice are measured and disputed. It defines the terrain of political debate, including some matters as legitimate points of discussion and excluding others.[10] The languages of a dominant group, if appropriated by a subordinate group, may inhibit its ability to express heretical ideas and to conceive of alternative images of society. An important method of testing cultural hegemony in a colonial context is to judge the extent to which the colonized operate within the confines of colonial discourse and the extent to which such discourse constrains the actors who use it from constructing formulations that more fully challenge colonial rule and the underlying moral principles on which it is based. Even resistance to an alien government may be evidence of the continued influence of hegemony if it fails to break the confines of the legitimating idioms of colonial domination.

At the same time, historians must recognize that subordinate groups play a creative role in shaping the meanings of the languages that they employ. Language is a major battleground of politics, where individuals and groups constantly contest the meanings of terms, symbols, and

concepts as they compete for power and strive for justice. Over time, through the conflicts of day-to-day politics, the bounds of what is appropriate political discussion can change, though new boundaries are constantly being constructed.[11] Forty years after the struggle between the civil administration and the Sabha, it would have been rash for any political actor in Surat, British or Indian, to suggest that local councillors should not enjoy the right to elect their own president. But in other important respects—such as the assumption that civic authority should be exercised by men with special public qualifications who would represent the people and who would be committed to progress and the common good—the old language of public politics remained largely intact.

Analysis of political discourse thus needs to maintain an awareness of the dual character of a hegemonic language as a constraining influence and as a ground of political conflict. The concept of a negotiated hegemony acquires value precisely because it recognizes that subordinate groups make their own culture, but they may do so within the framework of certain assumptions issuing from the dominant group.

A major premise of this study is that political rhetoric—the language used in seeking political influence and in asserting claims to justice—plays a critical role in shaping political culture and that examining it can illuminate the causal relationship between colonial domination and the production and reproduction of cultural forms by the colonized. Here I adopt a very broad conception of rhetoric, one that includes not only political performances that are spoken or written but other forms of politically significant symbolic action as well. The chief sources for this study are familiar ones: petitions, addresses, resolutions, newspaper editorials, and texts of public speeches. But I also suggest that other, often unspoken, forms of cultural behavior—participation in ritual, gift giving, membership in certain kinds of organizations, and gestures of protest—may also constitute rhetorical "statements" whose underlying meanings can be explored.[12]

Whatever its form, political rhetoric is purposive. That is to say, humans act and speak politically in order to achieve power, wealth, and status; to defend themselves against threats to their livelihoods and reputations; or to implement their notions of justice. Success lies in shaping the perceptions and emotions of others and in inducing them to act in desired ways. Analysis of the efficacy of political rhetoric thus leads inevitably to viewing rhetoric as a *social act* involving both a speaker and an audience. As Sandra Sizer has argued:

> Changing the world necessitates changing the minds of those who construct reality, and that implies persuading them to accept a particular definition of it. The same necessity for persuasion holds if one is talking

> about preserving rather than changing the definition of the world; for it is not a question of inertia versus change but of the ongoing activity of maintaining a world of any sort. This perspective forces one to view each cultural phenomenon as part of a speaker (or writer) and audience relationship, with very definite social purposes. . . . Focusing on the rhetorical aspect can provide . . . a more adequate approach to the problem of the relation between text and social situation.[13]

To a great extent political influence flows from the ability to frame arguments in a manner that is convincing or emotionally evocative to individuals and groups whose behavior one hopes to affect. Even hereditary leaders are continuously involved in persuasive efforts, since they must regularly remind their followers of the importance of their family's qualities through genealogies and ritual performances.

Though the word *rhetoric* and other concepts used in this work—*idiom, symbolic action,* and the *management of meaning*—tend to imply that people use language in a self-conscious, calculating manner, we cannot assume that political actors are free to manipulate words and symbols as they choose.[14] In the process of attempting to persuade others, humans constantly generate the cultural meanings by which they themselves understand reality and perceive their own interests. As people present their cases to their potential followers or their political overlords and as they defend their formulations against the claims of their rivals, they develop commitments to principles they have espoused; they come to see alternative principles as threatening, illogical, or hopelessly utopian. The understandings that they generate may thus create new limitations for themselves in future formulations and indeed may also constrain their opponents, who may have to resort to the same language in countering their contentions. Logic employed repeatedly can assume the authority of "common sense," so that individuals and groups find it difficult to formulate and conceive of their own self-interests outside its limits.[15]

Objective structures, such as the shape of social power or institutions of politics, seriously influence the process by which certain assumptions and issues of conflict become accepted and survive as commonsensical ones. Within a political environment, some kinds of rhetoric will successfully evoke agreement, strong emotional responses, or even political action from important wielders of power. These forms may come to acquire a privileged position in a political culture. Approaches which are ignored, laughed at, or repudiated by those one seeks to influence may be discarded. In time, general dispositions and assumptions take shape, creating "practices and representations that are regular without reference to overt rules and that are goal-directed without requiring conscious selection of goals or mastery of methods of achieving them."[16]

For elites in Surat, the key objective structures influencing political rhetoric were ones clearly associated with British rule: the courts, schools and colleges, the municipality, and, most important, the dominating presence of the European colonial rulers. As in many colonial settings, persons in the city who wished to achieve or maintain political prominence needed to master methods of addressing the alien ruling group. But, at the same time, they also had to be concerned with maintaining some support from the indigenous population in order to perpetuate their social statuses in local society, to gain or sustain recognition as local leaders, and to win seats in the municipality. Both audiences—the colonial rulers and the people of Surat—had their own distinct languages, which defined the general issues of political discussion and debate, the key symbols and vocabulary, the possible range of assumptions about justice and power, and even the appropriate organizational forums and arenas in which politics took place.[17]

Such a picture, of course, is a simplified abstraction of a more complex reality. First of all, neither of these two audiences was perfectly homogeneous; each contained subaudiences with their own subcultural idioms. The colonial rulers included a number of groups with conflicting interests—administrators, businessmen, educators, missionaries, and others. Even the South Asians who gained entry into the Indian Civil Service and other high-level administrative positions must be considered part of the ruling group. The local population, too, was composed of numerous subcommunities with distinct political identities and idioms. Moreover, it was also stratified, containing important leaderships that had little direct contact with British civil servants. *Elites*—and I will use the term in this study to refer to persons who acted as intermediaries between the colonial rulers and the Surtis—were often concerned more with gaining the backing of the city's most powerful local magnates than with mobilizing the underclasses of Surat for direct political action. No doubt, too, there was some interpenetration of the languages of the governors and the governed, as the colonizers tried to make sense of their subjects' society[18] and as the colonized injected alien notions into their own politics, for instance, as a result of their involvement in the colonial legal system.[19]

Yet once these complexities are recognized, this picture remains a useful one for analysis. To a great extent, the access of imperial rulers and native subjects to each other's political languages remained limited except through the intervention of interpreters, specialists with a knowledge of both kinds of discourse. These mediating figures were more than just translators; they also aspired to power and influence. Their position of leadership depended upon being able to cultivate their two audiences successfully. A municipal commissioner on the Sabha who wished to influence colonial policy needed to have mastered

municipal law, the ritualized procedures for the presentation of petitions and for debate within the council, and the language of constitutional justice if he were to make an effective case to the government. But if he failed to address concerns of his indigenous clients (and patrons), he risked the loss of his local social standing or of votes at the next election.

For illustrative purposes, it is useful to imagine three hypothetical ways an elite group could adapt rhetorically to its two audiences: (1) a nonhegemonic pattern, (2) a hegemonic pattern, and (3) a counterhegemonic pattern. Each of these patterns of adaptation is characterized by different forms of accommodation and resistance to colonialism. While this typology does not capture all of the more specific modes of cultural accommodation to colonialism, it should suggest the range of possibilities available. In constructing this typology, I by no means wish to suggest any inevitability of movement between one type and another.

A nonhegemonic adaptation is characteristic of colonial systems that are maintained simply by coercion or by a marriage of convenience between European rulers and traditional indigenous elites. Here the indigenous leaders may be "bilingual," but only imperfectly. They give meaning to their actions primarily within precolonial paradigms of authority and justice, entering colonially derived idioms temporarily and only to secure very specific ends. In the metaphor of language learning, they do not yet think in their second language; they attribute little symbolic importance to the words and notions they manipulate in this language. A nonhegemonic situation is inherently unstable, lasting only as long as the colonized believe that revolt is futile or that indigenous leaderships feel that they can obtain sufficient advantages from a relationship with the rulers that it remains worth their while to collaborate. If these conditions disappear, the leaders may try to organize their followers to resist the foreigners, perhaps in the name of restoring the traditional polity.

An elite that bargains with the colonial overlords extensively over time may, however, develop a hegemonic adaptation. In this situation the indigenous leadership has become fully bilingual—it has come to regard colonially derived principles as common sense, at least in political arenas of central significance to the alien rulers. It enters into the discourse of the colonizers regularly, it holds the colonizers to principles they espouse, and it frames its own identity at least partially in reference to alien ideological models. Under these conditions, imperial domination is no longer based upon coercion alone; it depends also upon the joint participation of local leader and colonial ruler in a common sphere of political action where the governing paradigms issue from the language of the colonial rulers.[20]

Yet because of its need to create a following, to maintain local standing, or to demonstrate command of local influence to the rulers, the elite intermediary often must continue to operate in domains of politics under the control of indigenous social groups. Here languages of precolonial origin may continue to hold sway. In a hegemonic situation, the notions that had once sanctioned the authority of the displaced rulerships tend to lose force over time, but the underclasses—meaning here all those who do not interact directly with the colonial overlords—do not necessarily come to accept the culture of the colonizers in every sphere of their lives. Indigenous idioms not directly challenging colonial rule may still remain entrenched—for example, idioms stressing the importance of family ancestry; loyalties to friends, kinspeople, and caste or clan fellows; or the duty of leaders to sustain religious worship and to meet certain religious obligations. Such principles may be at odds with the imperial emphasis on loyalty to the state and disinterested public service; they may offer to the colonized sources of solidarity, identity, and self-worth that are not dependent on adherence to colonially derived values; they may indeed express a contradictory consciousness which implicitly opposes many colonial presumptions and even informs everyday resistance to the political order but they do not constitute a fully articulated anticolonial ideology.[21]

By appealing to members of their own society in the local idioms of indigenous politics and by engaging in behavior that provides a certain check on colonial policies, such as "inefficiency," "corruption," "nepotism," and other obstructions to progress, indigenous elites may sustain the support of critical elements of their own society. But at the same time, by maintaining a specialized control over the languages needed to communicate directly with the ruling group, the elite may effectively keep the larger population outside the most crucial domains of political decision-making. The underclasses are unable to participate in the outer arenas, where the shape of the larger polity is determined, because they lack access to the necessary linguistic tools. This contributes both to the maintenance of colonial hegemony and to the perpetuation of underclass dependence on the elite, that is, to factionalism.

A third possible form of rhetorical adaptation, that of counterhegemony, typically develops only in extreme situations, perhaps most commonly among leaderships that have been exposed to hegemonic ideas but have come to feel that all possibility of bargaining with the colonial rulers has been blocked. Frustrated by such circumstances, especially innovative persons may emerge with an ability to generate or appropriate a new language that attempts both to escape and confront colonial presumptions. Typically, the revolutionary who espouses such a counterhegemony still addresses two audiences. In order to shake colonial self-confidence, rouse international opinion, and embarrass elite

groups who collaborate with the rulers, he or she needs to expose the fallacies of colonial contentions. This by necessity involves entering the languages of the colonizers, if only to turn upside down the standard assumptions implicit in these languages. At the same time, the revolutionary hopes to "mobilize" the "masses" to join in smashing colonial domination, a goal that is usually possible only if he or she draws upon indigenous idioms. Evoking potent indigenous symbols and myths, the revolutionary provides members of his or her society with a sense of pride and an identity; employing a powerful moral vocabulary, he or she may create a sense that the highest principles of indigenous culture are at stake. But while nonrevolutionaries may be content with using different idioms in different political contexts, proponents of counterhegemony attempt to collapse the languages of the outer and inner domains into one. Revolutionaries are generally intolerant of bilingualism, of any attempt to compartmentalize existence in distinct moral spheres. They attack important aspects of tradition at the same time they challenge alien rule and try to fashion an all-encompassing set of principles, in some cases by radically juxtaposing notions drawn from very different sources. Through this process, they provide the colonized with a means of making sense of the outer domain and of deriving meaning from actions that confront their domination.

In Surat, I will argue here, political leaderships after the mid-nineteenth century tended to follow the hegemonic pattern of adaptation to colonialism. Elites in the city pursued status, power, and justice within the framework of special relationships with colonial rulers and of institutions established by the Anglo-Indian administration, particularly the local municipality. Within this framework, they discovered, they could achieve important goals as individuals and sometimes also satisfy the larger groups to which they belonged. But willingness to engage in bargaining with the rulers meant adhering to liberal representative conventions of approach and persuasion that were to a great extent borrowed from British culture. Over time, by accommodating themselves to the discourse of their rulers, local leaders redefined their concepts of political morality, reformulated their own roles, and set the basis for the development of new identities. While there was a period in which counterhegemonic discourse dominated—the Gandhian phase of politics associated with the noncooperation movement of 1919–24—this period proved short-lived.

The purpose of this book is to show how, through these processes, a *public* culture—that is, conventions and political discussion and debate revolving around originally British notions of public opinion and the public good—gradually took shape in Surat and how this created an arena of civic action that effectively excluded the city's underclasses

from a genuine participation in shaping the larger political order. In part 3 of this book, I examine how this public culture was constructed during the late nineteenth century and how it withstood momentarily the crisis of World War I. In part 4, I explore challenges to this public culture posed by the Gandhians—but I also document how the counterhegemony offered by the Gandhians failed to institutionalize itself as a replacement for a colonially derived language. In both sections, I show how powerful instruments of colonialism worked to confine political discourse within liberal democratic and communalist principle.

First, however, I must establish the social setting in which these processes occurred and consider whether alternative approaches to the development of civic values and conventions, such as the westernization and Marxian models, provide satisfactory tools for our undertaking. So in the next part of this study, I examine Surat's economy, the idioms of indigenous politics, and the historical patterns of elite adaptation to rule by outsiders before the mid–nineteenth century.

PART TWO

Surat City and the Larger World

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The Urban Economy

"Surat," declared the municipal councillors of the western Indian city in an address to the viceroy, Lord Curzon, in 1900, "is now but a shadow of its former self."[1] What had been in the seventeenth century South Asia's greatest international entrepôt had become, by the beginning of the twentieth, a rather unexceptional mofussil town. Gone were the ships carrying goods to and from the East Indies, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Gone were the groups of merchants from overseas who had once given the city a vibrant cosmopolitan character. Gone, too, were the indigenous merchant princes of Surat, once among the richest in the world. During the nineteenth century fires and floods had struck the city time and time again, leaving some parts uninhabited for decades. With the building of railways and the silting up of the Tapi River, which flows through the city to the Arabian Sea only a few miles away, the trade of Surat's harbor had largely disappeared. Thousands of residents, both wealthy and poor, had left for the booming commercial-industrial-administrative center of Bombay. Surat had ceased to be a central place of great significance and had become instead a satellite of the great colonial port to the south.

The decline of Surat has been a dominant theme in the writing on the city's history and has colored even its own residents' perception of their locality. Yet for the historian whose interest centers on understanding the social roots of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century politics, Surat's socioeconomic fabric is as significant a subject as its decline. Curzon and other British administrators of his time might have been surprised at the considerable continuity in the quality and character of urban life in Surat. Physically the city had hardly undergone metamorphosis. It remained, as it had been three centuries earlier, crowded, often dirty, with the well-built houses of wealthy citizens

standing in contrast to impermanent structures of urban laborers and artisans. Pedestrians and carts pulled by men and bullocks still struggled past each other in the narrow alleyways and streets. Most Surtis continued to live in tightly defined localities; no new neighborhoods had replaced those devastated by natural and human-made disasters. The only obvious signs of British presence were the tiny settlement of foreigners near the police grounds, the Irish Presbyterian church and its mission school, a few scattered post offices and public buildings, the railway station, and a single "imperial" road from the city center to this station. Three modern factories stood isolated on the edge of the city. Although the municipality had torn down the inner walls of the city for sanitary reasons, Surat's outer walls still stood.

Even more significant for the purposes of this study, there were important continuities in the local economy and economic structure. Under British rule, the institutions of colonialism had no doubt penetrated the material life of many Surtis, and both merchants and artisans had had to make adaptations to changes in Indian and international conditions. But these changes did not disrupt relationships built around ties of affection, status, and community that had always been critical to the urban economy. Instead residents tended to reproduce preexisting economic structures and practices as they adjusted to their incorporation in the vast empire ruled by the British and a world economy dominated by European capital.

THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ECONOMY

Interpretations based upon the westernization and the Marxian approaches tend to start from an assumption of an autonomous and stagnant precolonial society that was, with the imposition of colonialism in the nineteenth century, suddenly subjected to the powerful exogenous forces of Western education and capitalism. Recent historical scholarship, however, has thrown into doubt any static conception of the "traditional" Indian economy. Frank Perlin, a leading figure in this reconsideration, has argued: "India, like Europe, was affected by profound and rapid change in the character of its societies and economies, and state forms, from at least the sixteenth century. . . . a fundamental aspect of that development was a local merchant capitalism which emerged independently of that in Europe, but within a common international theatre of societal and commercial changes."[2] By the early Mughal period, a highly developed commercial system had taken shape in South Asia, one characterized by a number of features once thought to be associated only with modern capitalism: considerable agricultural production for the market, the penetration of merchants and traders

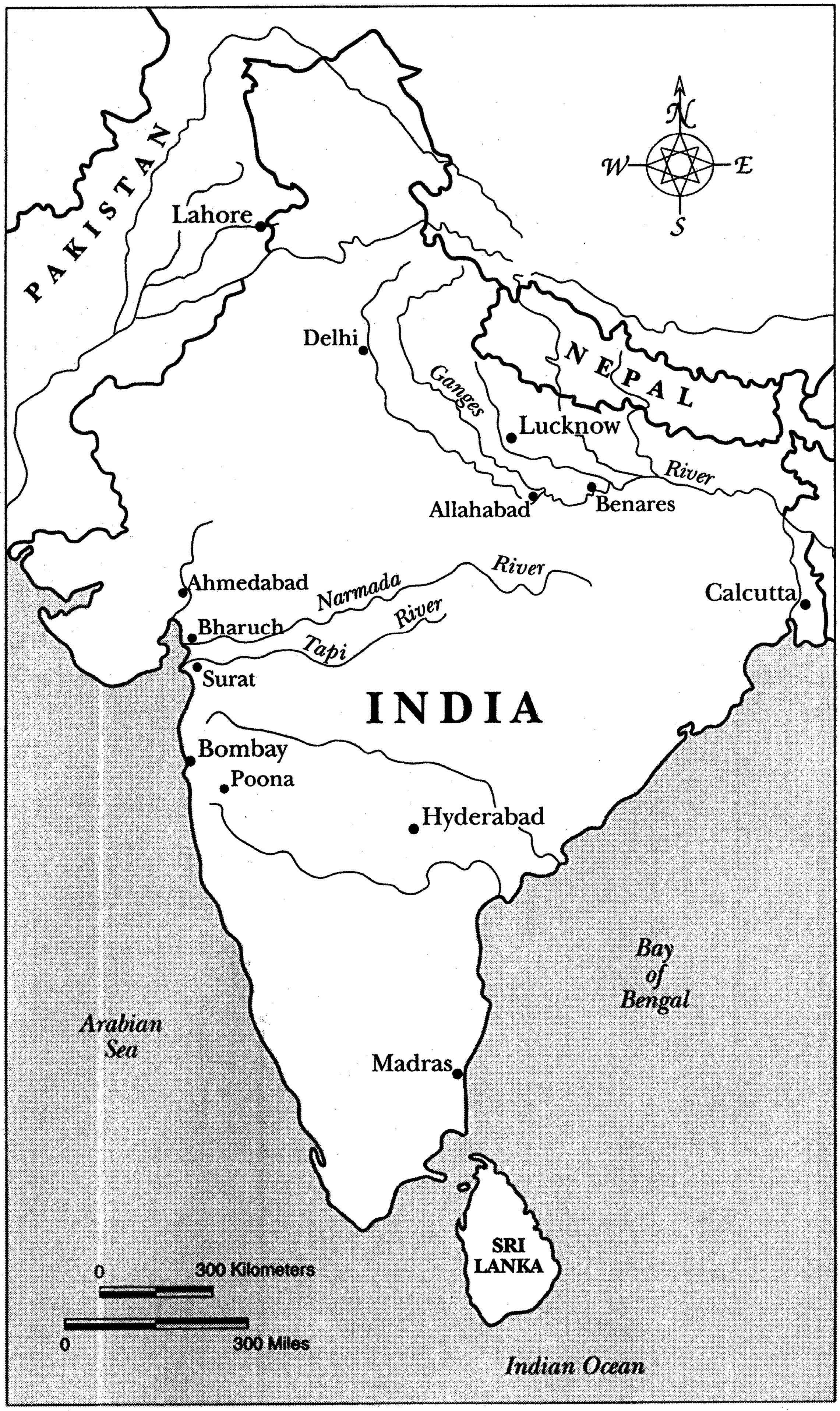
into the agrarian economy, the manufacture of large volumes of luxury and nonluxury textiles for domestic and international consumption, a sophisticated monetary system, and extensive trading networks integrating the subcontinent with West Asia, Southeast Asia, China, and Europe.

Located on the western Indian coast in the southern portion of Gujarat—an especially important region of trade and industrial production—Surat was a critical center in this international economy (see map 1). An indigenous commercial economy, with a history that predated the arrival of the first ships of the English East India Company, thrived in the city. The vibrancy of local commerce was readily apparent to all visitors. Ovington, a late seventeenth-century British traveler, wrote of Surat:

> Surat is reckoned the most fam'd emporium of the Indian Empire, where all commodities are vendible, though they were never there seen before. The very curiosity of them will engage the expectation of the purchaser to sell them again with some advantage, and will be apt to invite some other by their novelty, as they did him, to venture upon them. And the river is very commodious for the importation of foreign goods, which are brought up to the city in hoys and yachts, and country boats, with great convenience and expedition. And not only from Europe, but from China, Persia, Arabia, and other remote parts of India, ships unload abundance of all kinds of goods, for the ornament of the city, as well as the enriching of the port.[3]

Under Mughal rule, which began in 1573, Surat replaced Cambay as Gujarat's premier commercial center. By the seventeenth century the population of the city had expanded to somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000.[4] New neighborhoods, peopled by artisans and petty traders, sprang up outside the older settlements which had clustered close to the river's edge. As travelers' accounts attest, the city quickly developed its compact, congested, even unsanitary character while becoming India's most important commercial outlet.

By the high point of the Mughal Empire, the city was the hub of a great number of important trade routes: roads and coastal waterways that linked the port with the manufacturing centers of Bharuch, Cambay, and Ahmedabad within Gujarat; the more extended routes along the coastline of the subcontinent to Bengal in the east, Malabar in the south, and Sind in the west; the overland cart paths to the Mughal heartland in northern India; and overseas routes in the Indian Ocean, particularly to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, but also to eastern Africa and Southeast Asia, China, and Japan. Traders based in Surat played critical integrating roles through much of this vast network, coordinating production by artisan family firms, selling commodities



Map 1. The Indian Subcontinent

through their agents located in all the major cities of India and in numerous commercial centers overseas, and purchasing goods to channel back through the port. Gujarati shippers, mostly Muslims, transported both luxury items and goods for ordinary consumption to international markets in vessels that rivaled the European ships in trade if not in battle. The credit notes (*hundis*) of local merchant bankers (*sharafs*), which were honored all over the subcontinent, made possible substantial transactions between towns in India and with ports overseas without large initial cash outlays. Surat's merchants also penetrated into the countryside of South Gujarat as moneylenders and tax-farmers and as traders in the agrarian produce of the region.[5]

With this expansion in business activity came the development of powerful mercantile elites. Merchant princes such as Virji Vohra, a Jain trader and banker during the mid–seventeenth century, and Abdul Ghafar, a Sunni Bohra shipper at the turn of the eighteenth century, were probably among the world's wealthiest persons. They and a few dozen other traders and bankers who had benefited from domestic and international commerce under Mughal rule held a dominant position not only in the economy but also in important areas of the city's social life. As the research of Ashin Das Gupta has demonstrated, the business elite of Surat and Gujarat came from vastly differing social backgrounds. Indian merchants included Brahmans, Hindu and Jain Vaniyas, Muslims (both Shia and Sunni), and Parsis. But foreign traders from Armenia, Arabia, Turkey, Europe, and other distant lands also lived in Surat and participated in its commerce during the seventeenth century.[6]

Despite this sophisticated commercial order, the local economy hardly fit the image of an order built upon the free, amoral exchange that supposedly goes hand in hand with capitalism. A striking feature of economic organization in the city was the way in which strong social relationships grounded in indigenous moral conceptions intersected with and bolstered trading and production relations. For artisans and traders, both big and small, the joint family served as the basic economic unit. Caste was also essential to the structuring of economic life. It was not uncommon for entire trades to be dominated by particular castes or communities which tried to ward off outside competitors and employed social sanctions to reinforce business agreements. In lines of commerce involving a number of communities these same functions could be performed by guild-like organizations known as *mahajans*, which set rules for conducting business, fixed holidays, and established prices and wages for artisans, but which also exercised religious functions, such as building temples and rest houses for Hindu and Jain pilgrims.[7] Such communities of trust often provided much-needed

security against the risks of rapidly fluctuating markets, business agreements not backed by legally enforceable contracts, and the provision of finance by individual bankers rather than by impersonal institutions.

Particularly critical to commercial and financial dealings in Surat and in its larger trading networks were perceptions of the reputability of the transacting partners. Merchants frequently conducted their trade as much on the basis of their *abru* as on their material resources. Even more than its English equivalent, *credit,* the word *abru* suggested a family firm's reputation for honoring its agreements and its more general status within urban society. The significance of *abru* to the commerce of the city is most apparent in the operations of the great *sharafs*. The credit of individual merchant bankers was essential to the acceptance of their *hundis* in trading centers not only in Surat itself but also elsewhere in the Mughal Empire and in the ports of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. If these *hundis* had lost their viability, then the merchants who carried them would have been unable to make their purchases, and the whole trading network could have collapsed.[8] According to one local saying, the credit of Atmaram Bhukan, an especially prominent eighteenth-century banker of Surat, was so great that even if his *hundis* were tied to the branches of a tree, they would still be accepted.[9] Credit also affected the willingness of traders to deposit funds with a banker, as local merchants confirmed in an eighteenth-century petition to the East India Company:

> The entire belief that property is perfectly secure in the house of a shroff [*sharaf*] forms what is called his credit which more than his actual money is the instrument of his dealing and the greater source of his profits. Those who come to trade in this city either bring their bills on the shroffs or lodge the produce of their goods with them during their stay from many parts of India. . . . for all these sums deposited, no receipts are given, the books of the shroffs and the opinion of their faith and substance are the total dependence of the people who deal with them.[10]

As we shall see in the next chapter, opinions of the "faith and substance" of individual merchants were established not in their business dealings alone, but also in patterns of religious giving and the exercise of moral leadership in the community.

Even in the organization of local industry, business relations were often built around preexisting social ties. Most historians tend to agree that joint-family artisan firms exploiting chiefly family labor and producing in the home were the basic units of industrial activity. Textiles usually were manufactured in distinct steps performed in different workshops by different semiautonomous artisans rather than in larger operations under a single roof supervised by a single industrialist.

Specific caste groupings tended to control the labor in specific stages of the overall process, thus providing group members with some protection against outside competition. Most artisans, however, lacked sufficient knowledge of market conditions and were too vulnerable to the frequent changes in demand to participate in commercial activity directly without seriously endangering the survival of their firms. Usually they relied upon local merchants—with whom they often developed long-standing relationships—for the supply of capital, either in the form of cash advances or of raw materials. These merchants offered low payments to their artisan clients but often provided work during slack periods.[11] Thus, to use Goren Hyden's term, there existed in the domestic manufactures an "economy of affection," in which production relations overlapped strongly with noneconomic social bonds.[12] The moral economy of domestic manufacture allowed local artisans and merchants alike to bear better the risks of participation in the unstable market conditions of the precolonial period.

All this suggests special problems with social science models that have viewed joint-family, caste, community, and patron-client relations as "precapitalist" or "feudal" social forms at odds with market-oriented economies. Certainly *precolonial* is a more satisfactory label. But the perpetuation of these forms after 1800 suggests that, even in using this alternative terminology, we must avoid any teleological reasoning that would suggest the incompatibility of these structures with the altered economic circumstances of colonialism. Under British rule, many precolonial institutions and relations adapted to changes in the larger world rather than disintegrated. Thus, even in the midst of a decaying city, an economy that relied on relationships of affection and trust continued to sustain itself.

DECLINE WITHOUT COLLAPSE

That Surat suffered a serious contraction in its economic activity between 1700 and 1900 seems beyond dispute. Two distinct phases of decline are discernible. The first began before the establishment of full British sovereignty over the city in 1800 and was at least partially a product of developments independent of the East India Company's rise, such as the growing insecurity of trade routes in the Mughal Empire, the increased pressures placed on local merchants by Mughal noblemen eager to supplement their revenues, and shrinking markets in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf as a result of instability in the Safavid and Ottoman Empires. These developments were accompanied by changes in which the English did have a hand, such as the displacement of Indian shipbuilding by European competitors and, particularly, the

rise of Bombay as a major center of commerce.[13] The new port city, protected from Maratha raids and Mughal exactions alike, attracted many merchants from Surat itself, including some who had made fortunes as brokers of the company and as independent traders. Nonetheless Surat remained a major center of western Indian trade and industry at the end of the eighteenth century.

The second, more serious, phase of decline began with the establishment of colonial rule and lasted until about 1870. During this period Surat experienced a series of catastrophes: floods, earthquakes, famines, and fires, the most devastating being the fire of 1837, which raged for days and destroyed 7,000 homes and caused 5 million rupees damage. At the same time, the Tapi River gradually silted up, making the city inaccessible to the largest vessels. Yet, given the wealth and the resilience of the city's commercial elites, Surat might have rebounded from these traumas if not for serious structural changes associated with the rise of British power: the breaking of government's financial dependence on local merchant bankers, which eliminated a profitable area of investment for local *sharaf*s; the agrarian depression of the 1820s and 1830s, undoubtedly caused by excessive company revenue demands on the countryside; the declining position of the Mughal gentry and other landed elites who had been major consumers of Surti luxury goods; and shifts in patterns of international trade caused by the continued contraction of West Asian demand and the emergence of serious competition from the great European manufacturing centers. Also significant was the continued growth of Bombay, first as a port, then with the development of the modern textile industry, as a major manufacturing center. Large numbers of local merchants migrated there to participate in the burgeoning commerce.[14]

Given the range of factors working against the city's prosperity, one might initially wonder how Surat remained as important as it did. Clearly, nineteenth-century demographic figures do not indicate an expanding urban economy. In 1816, Das Gupta has estimated, there were approximately 150,000 people living in the city, already a significant drop from a century earlier. In 1851, a local census estimated the population at 89,505.[15] Even taking into account likely underreporting, the city had lost at least one-third of its population during the first fifty years of company rule. Residents left entire neighborhoods abandoned after fires and floods, and little new construction took place. The city lost its cosmopolitan flavor, since few foreign traders chose to maintain local outposts any longer. Centers like Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Karachi, where one can legitimately talk about processes of urbanization, were characterized by large numbers of migrants, high proportions of males, and a concentration of residents between fifteen and

thirty-five, the prime working years. The demographic characteristics of Surat, by contrast, approximated those of the general, predominantly rural, population of Bombay Presidency as a whole (see Appendix, tables A1–A5).

But Surat did survive. And by the time of the first imperial census in 1872, its population had leveled off at just over 100,000 people. For the next six decades, the city maintained stability in its numbers (see Appendix, table A6).

This survival was made possible largely by continued mercantile and artisanal activity. The city sustained into the twentieth century a prosperous and diverse set of indigenous merchants who still controlled much of social and economic life. Most of Surat's wealthiest men continued to be either traders or *sharafs*.[16] At the same time the city's character as a home for small-scale industry consolidated itself. By 1921 Surat had a higher proportion of its population working in industry (47 percent) than Bombay (about 39 percent).[17] But in contrast to those in other industrial centers of western India, virtually all Surtis employed in manufacturing were concentrated in home-based industry.[18] The 5 percent of the local labor force employed in larger units worked mainly in the city's three cotton mills, each founded by a member of the old Mughal nobility and each of which was afflicted with constant problems in attracting capital.[19] Local business communities refrained from investment in modern industry, preferring either to devote their capital to commercial enterprise or to the mills of Bombay.[20]

The persistence of considerable artisanal production in Surat is particularly surprising given classical historiographical assumptions which suggest that the competition of factory-produced goods from Britain brought about the ruin of indigenous manufactures. Undoubtedly Surti artisans were unable to compete in most lines of ordinary cloth intended for everyday consumption. Certain processes in textile production, such as cotton spinning and cloth dyeing, suffered greatly from the influx of European and Japanese goods. But local merchants and artisans showed considerable resourcefulness in exploiting niches in the world economy relatively free from the competition of large-scale Indian or European industry. This was especially true in luxury manufactures such as the making of pearl necklaces, *jari* (gold thread) products, *kinkhab* (gold and silk cloth), and other fine silk and cotton textiles. Markets in these goods survived, in part because old ruling and landed groups retained some prosperity under the British imperium and continued to use their incomes to maintain life-styles involving conspicuous consumption, and in part because newly emerging elites chose to emulate the aristocratic style, particularly on important ceremonial occasions. Even the Parsis of Bombay, thought to be among the most west-

ernized communities of India, were important consumers of luxury textiles. Important markets for local goods existed in Gujarat, the Punjab, Bengal, the Deccan, and South India.[21]

Older markets in the Indian Ocean trade also survived, though hardly at seventeenth-century levels. In 1802, after decades of supposed decline in West Asian commerce, 35 percent of Surat's exports went directly to Arabia and Persia, about the same as the amount going to Bombay (much of which was undoubtedly reexported to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf). The value of piece goods exported to the Middle East far outstripped that of the region's cotton exports, easily South Gujarat's most substantial contribution to specifically colonial needs. A century later, many of Surat's most prosperous businessmen were continuing to sell local textiles, primarily luxury goods, in the traditional marts of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf areas, while others sent local manufactures to South Africa, Burma, Thailand, and China.[22]

In 1910, the Collector of Surat District, perhaps forgetting Surat's illustrious past, even found reason to trumpet the city's successes in the luxury manufactures before his superiors in his annual administrative report:

> Not only is Surat the world's center for the pearl trade, but it also holds the premier position in all India for gold and silver wire, and tinsel and brocade work and pre-eminently for the spangles and spirals of silver and silver gilt which it exports to Madras, Delhi, and many other centers. The Mahomedan population of Surat is very enterprising in foreign trade. Scarcely a family has not a branch establishment somewhere. From Tibet to South Africa, from Siam to Mombasa, everywhere the Rander and Surat Bohras penetrate and take with them silk and other goods manufactured in Surat. The wire and tinsel industry employs 10,000 persons while silk weaving employs another 10,000. Benares, formerly the chief competition, has now succumbed and it is said that at least 3000 skilled artisans have migrated from Benares to Surat recently because the employment and the state of the industry is better here.[23]

Two of the industries mentioned in this report—pearls and *jari*—had in fact undergone something of a resurgence during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Pearl production received a considerable boost from the migration of Naginchand Jhaverchand, known as the "king of pearls," to the city after the 1896–97 plague in Bombay. Naginchand founded a syndicate of Jain pearl dealers in Surat whose members bought large quantities of pearls from Arab dealers in Bombay and brought them to Surat to be strung.[24] The *jari* industry had also grown considerably. Surat had been only one of a number of major centers producing *jari* and *jari* products during the 1870s and 1880s, with, according to one estimate, around 1,200 men employed in

various phases of the industry. Local artisans, however, continued to improve their production methods, capturing markets from competitors in other cities who did not. *Jari* capitalists, largely drawn from the Patidar, Daudi Bohra, and Hindu Vaniya communities, fueled this expansion by searching out new markets and by providing their artisan clients with the capital to make technological changes. By 1910 the city was the leading *jari* manufacturing center in India, far surpassing Ahmedabad, Yeola, Poona, Delhi, and Lahore. Only Benares remained a serious rival. A local survey taken in 1909 estimated that nearly 500 dealers and from 8,000 to 10,000 workers were involved in *jari* and its subsidiary industries.[25] Expansion in the luxury manufactures may not have been sufficient to produce overall growth in the city as a whole, but it did sustain a certain equilibrium in the local economy.

While merchants and artisans continued to depend upon the commerce in luxury goods, they were nonetheless profoundly affected by developments in the larger world. By the early twentieth century, local textile producers had come to depend heavily on various foreign sources for their raw materials: silk thread came from China, gold and silver from European bullion markets, aniline dyes from Britain, and cotton yarn often from Japan. Pearl dealers obtained their raw materials from abroad, then sold the finished product through Bombay exporters to Europe. Not a single important local industry was untouched by changes in the world economy. But such changes did not need spell economic ruin when local economic actors adjusted to them with sufficient ingenuity.

Of course, some Surtis were involved in trades that could more appropriately be deemed colonial in their character, such as the trade in the agricultural produce of South Gujarat. Much of the region's cotton and grain, for instance, was sent to Bombay, where it was either sold to consumers or sent abroad. As overseas demand grew for India's raw produce during the nineteenth century, the marketing of grain and cotton expanded steadily.[26] Yet these trades were only a small portion of the city's commerce. In 1895, cotton and grain dealers constituted about 5 percent of local payers of income tax; only six of Surat's seventy-two top income earners were cotton or grain dealers.[27] Most people in these lines of commerce were Vaniyas or Brahmans.

There were also merchants engaged in the commerce of the Surat District in goods like cloth and sugar, trades which fit neither the traditional nor the colonial category perfectly. This commerce, always of some importance in the region, expanded under British rule, particularly after the construction of important railway lines that converged in Surat. In the fifteen years after the construction of the Tapi River Valley railway in the 1890s, cloth imports into Surat grew from 900,000

rupees to 2.5 million in value.[28] Piece-good dealers purchased mill-made cloth in Bombay and Ahmedabad through their agents, brought their goods to Surat, then either sold the goods or reexported them to the villages of South Gujarat. These traders were not confined to any single caste but generally belonged to high-status communities with long histories of commercial activity, such as Hindu and Jain Vaniyas, Brahmans, Daudi Bohras, and Memons.

In sum, Surat in the late nineteenth century was characterized by a complex market economy operating at a number of levels.[29] Given this evidence, it is hard to accept the contention of R. D. Choksey that the "story of trade" in nineteenth-century Gujarat concerns only "internal exchange of mostly agricultural commodities, and overseas shipment of raw materials through the port of Bombay."[30] The older luxury trades survived and often expanded alongside the export-oriented commerce in agrarian produce. A heterogenous and prosperous set of local merchants adapted to a slowly changing economic environment by exploiting diverse markets and sources of raw materials, both new and old. It is true that this commercial activity was not sufficient to fuel a "takeoff" in the urban economy. Surti producers were virtually excluded from participation in the manufacture of ordinary cloth and other necessities, the fields of investment that may have offered the greatest potential for expansion. But residents were able to sustain the commercial character of their city by continuing to supply areas of the world economy where Europeans had failed to become effective competitors.

THE CULTURE OF THE ECONOMY

The ability of local merchants and artisans to sustain precolonial economic patterns in the midst of British rule and economic decline becomes even more impressive when we turn to the social character of economic activity. No doubt, colonial institutions entered the lives of many economic actors in Surat, particularly the city's merchants, bringing about major changes in business practice. Most substantial traders had to cope with the British legal system when they entered contractual relationships. If they sold their goods overseas or obtained their supplies from abroad, they now had to deal with an emerging customs bureaucracy. Many faced new municipal regulations as well. The city's greatest *sharaf*s dealt with imperial joint-stock banks, where they often acquired credit and made deposits.[31] Virtually all merchants used the railways for transporting their goods; *jari* dealers even conducted much of their trade through the postal system. Most wealthy traders now had to pay income taxes to the district revenue establishment, which required them to fill out increasingly detailed forms. Dealing with all

these institutions required literacy, so education in government-funded municipal primary schools became essential, at least for merchants and bankers (as opposed to petty traders and artisans).[32] In short, the lives of Surat residents became entangled with a number of institutions introduced by the subcontinent's new rulers.

Yet these changes did not necessitate a radical restructuring of relations among the Surtis themselves. In both trade and industrial production, late nineteenth-century urban dwellers recreated economic relationships along well-established lines, often finding these relationships useful in coping with the new political and economic circumstances of the nineteenth century. Throughout the city commercial transactions and productive relations grounded in networks of trust and in powerful social bonds such as kinship, caste, and patron-client ties continued to provide security and stability for local economic actors.

Nineteenth-century British administrators and businessmen did very little to upset market mechanisms that were already capable, in many respects, of meeting colonial needs. In the luxury industries, the mainstay of Surat's economy, British business really had little interest. Though Indian textiles had been a major object of East Indian Company interest during the eighteenth century, the reorganization of local industry ceased to be a major priority of the English during the nineteenth.[33] The government of India made little attempt to regulate commercial practice and the treatment of labor in the luxury manufactures or to pass development-oriented legislation that might have transformed the nature of handicrafts production. But even in those trades most affected by European demand, British firms tended to work through existing social networks. Until quite late in the century, for instance, Bombay cotton dealers relied on local *mahajans* to ensure that their transactions would be honored in the absence of legal contracts. One English cotton trader stationed in Bombay during the 1870s reported that his firm regularly contributed a cess of 7 annas, 3 pice, per bale to the Hindu charities of guilds in up-country centers. In return, the *mahajans* backed the firm when local dealers failed to live up to oral agreements. Since the guilds could ruin any trader through ostracism, very few indigenous traders refused to meet their obligations. In this case, when one broker overdrew his account, the English business simply stopped payment of its cesses to the local temple. The middleman in question then quickly honored his agreement, apparently under heavy pressure from his *mahajan*.[34]

Reliance on *mahajans* no doubt declined by the early twentieth century, as contracts increasingly became the norm in European business practice. Still, few British companies had the ability to circumvent in-

digenous commercial networks and deal directly with the producer in the field. As A. D. D. Gordon has demonstrated, networks for the marketing of textiles and the acquisition of raw cotton from the mofussil often replicated features—such as the place of the *sharafs* in finance and exchange, the importance of trust in economic transactions, and the chains of intermediaries linking producers with exporters—that had been in place before colonial rule. Bombay firms bought raw materials at the point of export only after they had passed through the hands of a series of Indian middlemen.[35]

Ultimately the form of business relations at the local level had less to do with colonial priorities than with the concerns of indigenous actors. Foremost among these was the need for insurance against the continued uncertainty of the city's markets. Commercial insecurity preoccupied artisans and merchants during the nineteenth century as it had during Mughal times. Modern rail networks, postal systems, and the telegraph had improved transport and the flow of information, but local businessmen still faced considerable risks stemming from fluctuations in supply and demand, minimal government regulation, poor infrastructural facilities, and the limited development of a modern banking system. As in earlier times, few merchant families could sustain their firms for more than three generations. Those in the luxury trades may have been particularly vulnerable to ups and downs in their businesses. There were large seasonal and long-term variations in the demand for *jari* and silk. In 1900 the Collector of Surat reported that the trades in *jari*, embroidered silk, and cotton cloth were all in depression. One merchant, who had done 4 lakhs of business the previous year, now found himself without buyers.[36] But within just a few years the same industries were thriving again. In 1907 and 1908 the survival of the local pearl trade was in question, yet in 1910, as we have seen, Surat had risen to preeminence in the world pearl markets.[37] Patterns of economic behavior strongly backed by noneconomic structures helped participants in many professions cope with these fluctuations.

Local Industry

In the domestic manufactures, economies of affection continued to reproduce themselves. Artisans in the *jari* industry, for instance, built their firms around social relationships that permitted stable family livelihoods and their firms' survival into future generations. Members of the joint family provided much of the needed labor, with females and children performing valuable tasks in the workshop. Many of the *akhadedars* (master craftsmen) had quite large families and thus avoided the costs of hiring nonfamily members. When an artisan could not obtain sufficient labor from his own family, he usually recruited within his

caste. Caste organizations often worked to ensure that the group retained control over skills of a profession by punishing those who hired outsiders or who leaked manufacturing secrets. Within the workshop, *akhadedars* often acted as patrons to their employees, offering gifts on ceremonial occasions such as marriages and providing loans to meet workers' short-term needs. The laborers' indebtedness helped master craftsmen maintain access to a stable and dependable work force at low cost and over extended periods of time and cut down on the likelihood of theft, which was a danger in industries that handled small, valuable goods.

The master craftsman in turn was usually dependent on a merchant patron, who advanced the firm cash and raw materials in exchange for privileged access to the final product. In the gold-thread industry, for instance, individual *jari* merchants provided silver, the most important raw material in *jari* manufacture, to a few *akhadedar* clients, who then processed these materials for their patrons on a commission basis. Rather than receiving payment for each commission executed, most artisan firms developed running accounts with a single merchant and drew upon these accounts when they needed money for work or subsistence. The craftsmen generally fell into arrears, becoming almost permanently obligated to the merchant. Usually they could change patrons only when a new bidder for their services offered to pay their debts. Such dependent ties were at least partially welcome to the artisan, since they provided both dependable outlets for their goods and security against the frequent slumps which characterized the industry.[38]

Merchants involved in marketing luxury manufactures preferred to advance money and raw materials to artisan clients performing specialized tasks rather than to attempt to consolidate all the various production processes under one roof. Clientage arrangements with a few *akhadedars* gave them access to cheap sources of labor but required little commitment of fixed capital, thus lowering the likelihood of overextension. When sudden upswings took place, the merchants could often respond quickly by mobilizing their reliable pools of skilled labor. When downswings occurred, the merchants gave their artisan clients just enough work to keep them hanging on.[39]

Trade

In contrast to artisans, most merchants rarely ran the risk of failing to maintain subsistence. But to enhance their businesses' chances of survival in a competitive trading climate, they too chose to reduce their uncertainties by building their commercial activity on a wide range of social ties. At all levels of trade, the extended family firm—the *pedhi*—remained the basic unit of mercantile organization. Some of the more

substantial traders maintained *pedhi* branches in towns throughout western India in order to have personal agents on the spot, ready to make quick purchases of raw materials or to dispose of finished goods.

In dealings with their fellow traders, local businessmen continued to build their relationships at least partially along lines of mutual trust. A few lines of commerce, such as the Jain-dominated trades in silver and pearls, were controlled exclusively by members of a single community. In such cases, strong social pressure could be brought to bear on a merchant who failed to honor a commitment to a member. In the multi-community trades, occupational *mahajans* that restricted participation to those willing to subscribe to a common set of ethical standards, including the payment of a cess to the guild's religious charities, continued to play important roles in the local economy.[40] In all commercial transactions, the personal reputations of those involved remained critical. Traders who had developed reputations of respectability in the community could obtain goods without immediate cash payments and could acquire credit at low interest rates from *sharafs* with little or no security because of their perceived trustworthiness.[41] For some the introduction of legally enforceable contracts during the nineteenth century was only an added safeguard.

Most traders continued to rely on the indigenous merchant bankers for credit. The *sharafs* of Surat may have no longer performed the diversity of economic functions of their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors, but they still played financial roles that were essential to the urban economy. In 1895, thirty-four of the top seventy-two income earners in the city were engaged in banking or moneylending.[42] Traders at all levels used local moneylenders and bankers extensively and rarely dealt directly with the modern joint-stock banks of Bombay (no joint-stock bank yet existed in Surat). The cotton trade in South Gujarat was almost entirely financed by indigenous bankers, though many of these *sharafi* firms were now centered in Bombay.[43] In the *jari* industry, *jhaveris* (silver dealers) acted as bankers by providing merchants with the silver used in the industry at low interest rates.[44]

For local traders, the indigenous bankers had many advantages. Though many of the *sharafs* themselves had extensive dealings with joint-stock institutions, their methods of conducting business with their clients often remained intact. They continued to provide personal services, many of which were unavailable in modern banks. They kept flexible hours, accommodating clients with emergency needs. They allowed traders and shopkeepers overdrafts on their accounts. They issued *hundis* which were honored throughout western India, and they discounted the bills of banking firms from outside the city. Perhaps above all, they maintained absolute secrecy. Confidentiality was particu-

larly critical to the merchants of Surat, who often conducted their businesses on the basis of personal prestige and were anxious not to let details of their financial dealings become public knowledge. The greatest *sharafs* carried reputations as extremely trustworthy and respectable persons, reputations that were necessary to their success. It was not uncommon for a banking firm simply to collapse upon the death of its founder. The importance of the indigenous banking system as a whole, however, survived such individual failures.[45]

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATED "CLASS"

Given the many signs of structural persistence in the local economy, the late nineteenth-century development of the educated professions seems essentially a subtheme in the history of the city. As a headquarters of the district administration, Surat naturally attracted men seeking jobs in the revenue establishment, railway administration, post office, and the courts. The needs of the government, the municipal bureaucracy, and private corporations for educated employees expanded steadily during the late nineteenth century. In addition, a tiny number of people with English educations were able to establish lucrative careers in the independent professions, particularly law and medicine. Between 1892 and 1908, the number qualified to vote in the general ward of the municipality, an electoral ward composed largely of professionals, government employees and pensioners, and other educated persons, grew from 596 to 871.[46] Still, this was a tiny percentage of the total urban population. And few controlled the resources or the patronage of the great *sheths* (respectable merchants). Before World War I the growth of the services never overwhelmed the commercial and industrial character of Surat or produced a fundamental shift in the larger social structure.

Nor did the growth of the professions stimulate a sudden transition from a closed, static society in which economic roles were defined by caste to an open, class-based society. The picture was far more complicated. In the past, Hindu and Jain Vaniyas had undoubtedly dominated trade, Brahmans and Kayasthas the literate professions. But evidence of wealthy Brahman businessmen throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suggests that intrafamily mobility between occupations had been both significant and widely accepted in earlier times.[47] The presence of Vaniyas in the professions and Brahmans in business fields during the later nineteenth century seems to reflect at most a speeding up of preexisting processes of social circulation. It is also important to note that there was as yet extremely little movement of middle- and low-caste groups such as the Golas, Ghanchis, and Kha-

tris into either the professions or the most prestigious lines of commerce. Caste remained an important determinant of occupational opportunity.

Moreover, those who moved into the professions really did not constitute an independent "class" in the fullest sense of a set of persons who not only occupy a common economic position but also share an identity as a group distinct from other classes in society. In Surat, many educated men came from intact extended families where one or two brothers sought jobs in law or administration while the others remained in business. And, as the Cambridge scholars have shown for other regions of India, often those who acquired schooling served as agents of landed or merchant magnates. In civic politics, there was sometimes direct incentive for educated men to identify themselves as members of an "advanced class" opposed to a supposedly backward indigenous "aristocracy." Yet within the inner arenas of local politics these same people regularly worked as subordinates within vertical factions controlled by wealthy merchants and other magnates. During the Gandhian period, as we shall see, government employees, fearful of threats to their jobs, did tend to act more as a coherent group—for instance, by voting for moderate politicians in elections for the local municipal council. But such behavior was provoked by a short-term crisis and did not mark any permanent shift to a class-based politics. For the most part, public politics in Surat, particularly in high-caste society, tended to organize itself much more along the lines of faction than of either caste or class.[48]

CONCLUSION

Thus the Surat of 1900 retained many of the structural features of the famous seventeenth-century port city. The experience of Surat under colonial rule contrasts both with the pattern of rapid expansion characteristic of the major imperial administrative and commercial centers and with that of forced town growth typical of places that served chiefly as entrepôts for brokers dealing in exportable cash crops.[49] Surat may perhaps represent a third type of urban place associated with colonialism, that of a mature, relatively stable center able to sustain forms of commerce that did not compete with European products and able to reproduce preexisting social relations as it participated in a larger metropolitan economy.

The continuity in local economic structure raises doubts about interpretations that stress the necessity of a radical transformation in socioeconomic relations to the development of a public culture. Any attempt to relate the economic facts to the forms of politics that emerged dur-

ing the late nineteenth century must be a much more subtle one. We can safely conclude that the material life of many of the city's most prosperous people became implicated in colonial structures ranging from the bureaucracy to the railways to the educational system, and that the dependency of the Surtis on these structures militated against dramatic challenges to colonial power from below. But in pointing to such factors, we have not identified the processes by which civic politics were given their positive content. The key, I will argue, lies largely outside the economy: in the rhetorical interaction of indigenous elites with their colonial rulers and in the condition of colonial domination. But first we must examine the character of politics in the inner political domains of the city, domains which were of little vital concern to the British.

FOUR

The Inner Politics of the City

Given the elements of economic continuity in Surat, it is perhaps not surprising that key forms of local social life also tended to reproduce themselves over time. The economy certainly did not determine the character of urban society, but everyday economic practice under colonialism bolstered preexisting social structures such as the extended family, caste, and *mahajan*. Long before the establishment of colonial rule, social organization in the city had adapted to, and proved compatible with, an indigenous form of merchant capitalism. The slow contraction of the city's economy, without sharp discontinuities in its basic character, was hardly sufficient to effect a full-scale transformation of society during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Nor did the British legal system provide a shattering blow. On the one hand, indigenous institutions often successfully resisted being overwhelmed by the law; on the other, the courts and colonial policy generally affirmed rather than undermined relations based upon caste, male dominance, and social deference.[1]

From the seventeenth century into the twentieth, Surat was composed of diverse groupings defined chiefly by descent. Members of these sometimes intimate communities tended to congregate in distinct neighborhoods, to have their own forms of ritual life, and to form and maintain their own social institutions. For most residents, the affairs of these communities continued to be the most important domain of social action and their chief source of psychic satisfaction well into the twentieth century. Colonialism did not destroy the primacy of the inner arenas of urban life.

A major preoccupation of politics in these inner arenas was family reputation and community integrity. The social and economic wellbeing of every family depended upon preserving acceptance and re-

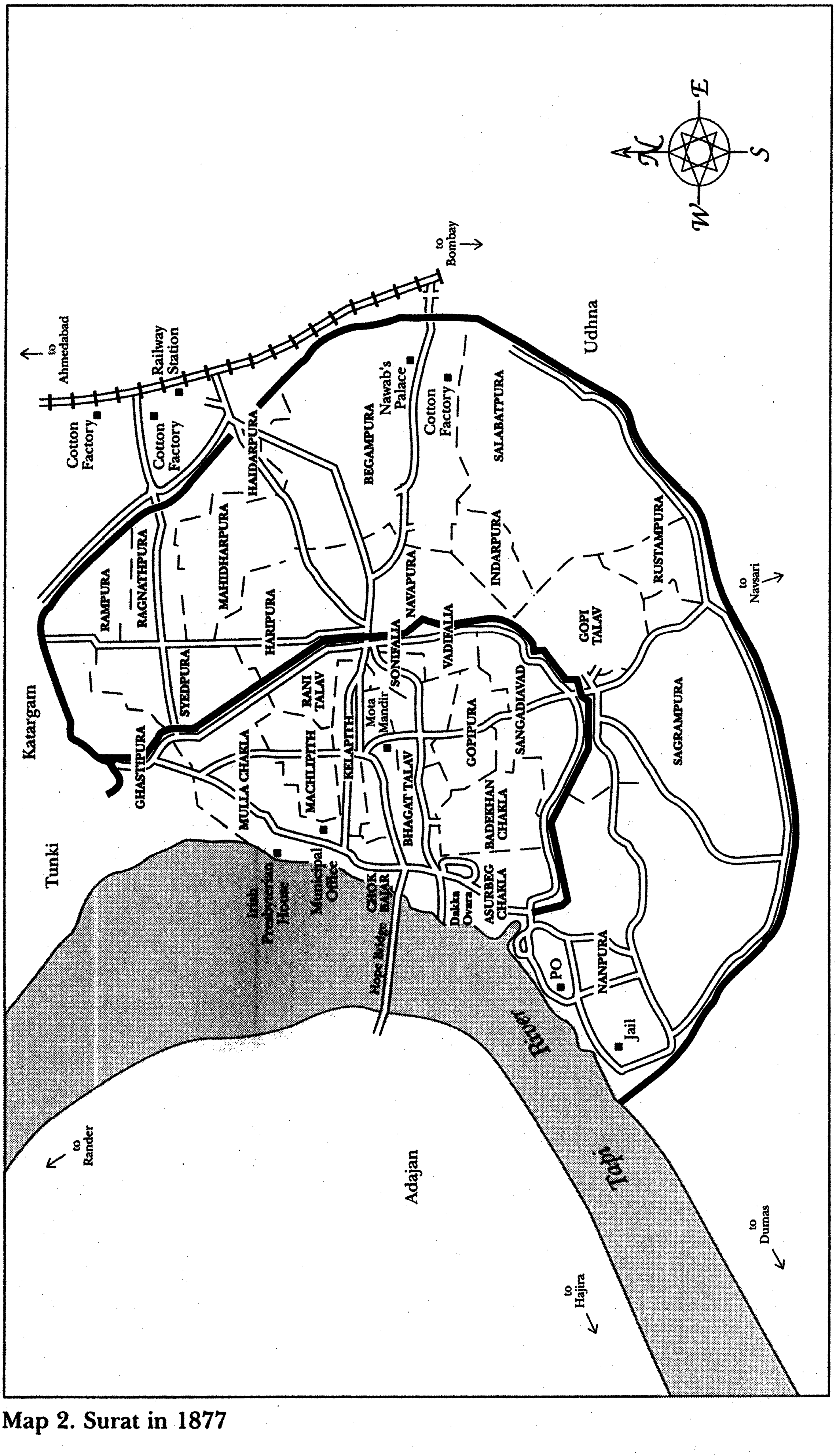
spect within the larger grouping or groupings of which it was part. Each such group, to use anthropological parlance, constituted a "moral community"—a set of individuals prepared to make judgments about one another and sharing a language and vocabulary for doing so.[2] Ordinary Surtis obtained status by observing and upholding essential group norms. Leadership often required a further step: active involvement in setting and enforcing these norms.

The idiom for making assessments about authority and respectability in the inner domain was, for most groupings in the city, one of precolonial origin. To make this point is not to suggest an unchanging culture. Though local residents thought of themselves as maintaining a stable system of values, they often in fact reinterpreted group traditions and norms in the course of everyday life. Nevertheless, the symbolic equipment which informed their decision-making—the "vocabulary of motive" in which they expressed their solidarity and made and judged claims to authority—was usually derived from traditions that predated colonial rule.[3] Colonial law and administrative policy contributed to this continuity by freezing certain indigenous principles as the critical standards of each collectivity, sometimes at the expense of others.

Unevenness in the available records makes any effort to reconstruct the languages of day-to-day politics in the inner arenas an extremely difficult one. Much of these politics took place outside any formal political institution, and even when such institutions existed, they rarely had the regular procedures for taking minutes or recording speeches that existed in local public organizations. Local newspapers are also generally silent on these issues since their editors' understanding of what constituted news remained largely confined to the affairs of the civic arena. We can, however, reconstruct indigenous political idioms by examining certain unwritten "statements" implicit in more general styles of leadership and organization. This chapter offers a sketch of the social organizations and the idioms of authority operating within the city's various communities around the turn of the twentieth century. It begins in the central areas of the city, then moves to the urban periphery.

SOCIETY IN THE URBAN CORE

A fundamental dividing line of urban society in Surat lay between the neighborhoods in the urban core and those in the outlying neighborhoods, or *puras* (see map 2). The core areas, clustering around the castle and the city *chok* (square), were peopled principally by high-status Hindu and Jain families employed in business, government service, and the professions, along with dependents who provided personal



Map 2. Surat in 1877

services to these families. The *puras*, by contrast, consisted largely of cohesive collectivities of artisans and petty traders and a few, even more self-contained communities of more prosperous residents such as the Parsis and Daudi Bohras. Until the 1860s, a wall had stood between the inner and outer city, roughly demarcating the bounds of the two types of society. But this basic pattern of social organization survived after the municipality leveled the wall for sanitary reasons.

The dominant families living in the central areas of Surat belonged to a category of high-caste *jnatis* (subcastes) known as the Brahman-Vaniya.[4] Included were a variety of Brahmans such as the Nagar, Anavil, and Audich; as many as forty-one subdivisions of Hindu Vaniyas; Jains (who were considered Vaniya by caste and who were also characterized by numerous *jnatis*); Kayasthas; and Brahma-Kshatriyas, all caste groupings associated with either commerce or government service. Together, these high-status families composed almost one-fourth of Surat's population.[5]

Residents of Brahman-Vaniya background maintained wide social ties across the boundaries of their various subcollectivities. Members of different endogamous units could belong to the same occupational *mahajan*, dine with one another, worship alongside each other in the same temples, and participate in the same festivals. In some cases, marriage alliances between families of distinct *jnatis* of the same broad caste grouping (e.g., the Vaniyas) were possible if proper arrangements were made ahead of time and if small fines were paid.[6] High-caste *jnatis* rarely segregated themselves from each other but lived together in localities in the urban core, such as Vadifalia, Sonifalia, Gopipura, Nanavat, Chok Bazaar, and Haripura.[7] Sectarian divisions also failed to preserve rigid boundaries. In their religious practice, Jains and Vaishnava Hindus employed Brahmans in domestic ceremonies, performed worship in each others' shrines, and honored the same holy men. Intermarriage was possible in some cases, especially since some *jnatis* included both Jain and Hindu families.[8] In contrast to most South Asians, the Brahman-Vaniyas placed little emphasis on the ranking of their internal subgroupings. At the same time, they generally kept a great social distance from peoples of low or middle caste. Descent thus remained critical for inclusion in this community.

Patterns of economic life among those employed in trade and the professions no doubt contributed to the diffuseness of Brahman-Vaniya organization. Because high-caste society was fluid, participation in most lucrative forms of trade was rarely preordained by heredity. Often survival in commerce necessitated abandoning the occupation of one's father and taking up some new business; the involvement of individual families in a single line of commerce for more than two or three

generations was more the exception than the rule.[9] Merchants could grow prosperous from quite modest beginnings during their own lifetimes.[10] And as we have seen, there was no rigid barrier obstructing Vaniyas from entering administrative positions or Brahmans from becoming merchants. Such considerable mobility kept social boundaries from hardening around narrower social groupings such as the endogamous unit.

The necessity of economic cooperation between families of different castes or sects in commerce also promoted relatively broad group affiliations. Vast and complex networks of trade based on trust and the need for interaction between traders and those involved in the literate professions nourished a larger community of mercantile and service-oriented families in which members shared a language for assessing each other's worthiness as persons.

For high-caste Surtis, and particularly for the city's merchants, the maintenance and improvement of reputation have always been central concerns. Members of the community employed a number of words for referring to their reputations: *man, pratishtha, ijjat,* and *abru* (all roughly translatable as honor, reputation, or prestige). The most significant of these was the term *abru,* perhaps because it conveyed both senses in which reputation was critical to the Brahman-Vaniyas: as the economic credit of the family firm and as its perceived status in local society. This conflation of meaning was no coincidence. Western Indian traders, like their counterparts in northern India studied by Chris Bayly, viewed social prestige and creditworthiness as inextricably related. Integrity in business dealings contributed to a merchant's or banker's social standing. Conversely, a firm's ability to mobilize capital and to carry on transactions without exchanges of cash often depended on a family's general image of respectability.[11]

Abru in both its interlinked meanings was an extremely fragile quality. High-caste families often built up local respect and honor over long periods of time, even generations, yet could easily dissipate their social standing by a single act of indiscretion such as an improper marriage, questionable business practices, meat eating, alcohol consumption, or contact with low-caste persons. Such uncertainty sometimes led to an extreme fastidiousness in pursuing and guarding reputation. Rival families competed with each other in the satisfaction of community norms, for instance, by attempting to marry their daughters to the sons of prestigious *sheth*s or by spending lavishly on wedding feasts and religious festivals. "Poor Surati," lamented one late nineteenth-century critic of local life, "his highest ambition is to celebrate the marriage of his children with 'abru.' Abru, what a wonderful thing [it] is, that you can not understand if you are not a Surati."[12]

Key to the acquisition and sustenance of *abru* was adherence to *dharma*, the sacred moral obligations that the community considered incumbent upon all of its members.[13] *Dharma*, as any work on Hinduism will confirm, is a code of conduct inherent in a person's gender, caste, or age group. In practice, however, the term refers not to some timeless notion; rather, its meaning has been reinterpreted and transformed over time and in various social contexts. In the dynamic culture of high-caste Gujaratis, the sources of *dharma* were located in three religious traditions, traditions that were theoretically and textually distinct but that actually had colored each other through interaction over the centuries. From Brahmanical Hinduism came concerns with ritual inclusion and exclusion and with social ranking based upon relative levels of purity and impurity.[14] Jainism, derived from the teachings of non-Vedic spiritual preceptors—the most prominent being Mahavira, a saint of the sixth century B.C.—contributed an emphasis on *ahimsa* (nonharm to living creatures), the importance of self-abnegation, and the tradition of performing austerities (*tapas*) by monk and layman alike.[15] Finally, Vaishnavism, spread through Gujarat after the fifteenth century by a series of Hindu saints, stressed the importance of devotion (*bhakti*) to Rama and Krishna, the mythical heroes of the great epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Vallabhacharya (1478–1521), the most popular of these saints, rejected *tapas* as a path to salvation, advocating instead *seva* (devotional service) to Krishna. Such service could be rendered by personal worship, singing hymns (*bhajans*) written by the saints, or offering food and clothing to the deity. Vaishnava religion in theory had a distinctly egalitarian flavor, emphasizing the capacity of all to achieve spiritual fulfillment through devotional surrender.[16]

High-caste families established their reputations through enduring patterns of social action grounded in a vocabulary drawn from these religious traditions. To a Western eye at least, high-status Hindus and Jains lived lives of considerable personal restraint, practicing vegetarianism, abstaining from alcohol, maintaining simplicity in dress and in housing, and refraining from overt expressions of sexuality.[17] They manifested their concern with the protection of living creatures, particularly the cow, by sponsoring *panjrapols* (hospices for sick and aged animals).[18] They observed pollution strictures and social rules governing the selection of acceptable marriage partners for their offspring. And they engaged in worship of Jain and Vaishnava deities. Women particularly assumed the responsibility of upholding family honor by presenting offerings to images in temples, singing *bhajans*, participating in religious festivals, and occasionally embarking on pilgrimages to holy sites.[19]

Leaders within high-caste society came from families that had built

up their *abru* through often painstaking efforts and that promoted the collective respectability of the larger community. Local conceptions of authority fit imperfectly with British notions that pictured India as dominated by hereditary community headmen. In Surat men attained leadership positions only by actively and continuously espousing, interpreting, maintaining, and defending *dharma* in ways that group members found satisfying. Throughout the city's history, the most prestigious of Brahman-Vaniya leaders usually came from among the city's wealthiest magnates. Around 1900, a handful of great merchants held particular sway. Among Hindus, the Mahajan Sheth (the leader of the chief Vaniya organization), the cotton merchants Ishwardas Jagjivandas Store and Thakordas Modi, the banker Gangaram Bharatiya, the sugar merchant Viththaldas Khandwala, and the piece-goods dealers Tribhuvandas Popawala and Motiram Reshamwala were especially prominent. Among Jains, the most significant were the families of the Nagarsheth (head of the chief Jain organization) and the pearl merchants Naginchand Jhaverchand and Hirachand Motichand. Some of these men came from families that had enjoyed high status in the city for generations; others had risen to prominence only during their lifetimes. But all had successfully cultivated special reputations through their efforts to safeguard and promote community integrity.

Within their *jnatis*, the *sheths* often were involved in setting and enforcing ethical standards that preserved and enhanced the prestige of the ritual unit. Through organizations known as *panchayats* they regulated the conduct of *jnati* members in matters such as commensality and marriage, thus upholding the position of the group in the larger community. The most powerful magnates, however, had established their authority far beyond the confines of their *jnatis*. Two kinds of roles seem particularly critical to their prominence in the locality: that of religious patron and provider of community needs, and that of leader within collective institutions known as *mahajans*.

Religious Giving

For the wealthiest merchants, following the *dharma* perhaps first and foremost meant giving. Evidence from the seventeenth century to the twentieth suggests great continuity in the importance of social spending to the development of elite status. The ideal *sheth* was one who scrutinized his books closely but who sacrificed large amounts of his wealth in sacred causes rather than accumulated capital or spent his resources to maximize his personal comfort; "Gifts by the *lakh*, accounts by the penny," went one Gujarati saying.[20] While this ideal may never have been realized perfectly, it was common for the greatest magnates to live in quite modest homes with sparse furnishings yet to expend vast

amounts in forms of giving regarded as meritorious. Status-generating gift giving took a multiplicity of forms: furnishing jobs and other forms of patronage to relatives and community fellows; providing food in times of distress; building wells, rest houses, and temples; and sponsoring substantial communal feasts. At Divali time, the great *sheths* regularly made gifts to relatives, dependents, brokers, and Brahmans. Colonial accounts, no doubt a bit exaggerated, claim that merchants sometimes exhausted their entire savings in the celebration of single festivities.[21]

Religious giving was especially critical to the achievement and maintenance of places of special esteem. The sacrifice of considerable wealth to Hindu or Jain deities epitomized the ascetic values of local religion. Adherents of both sects regarded the sponsorship of festivals, shrines, and saints as the *dharma* of persons with substantial fortunes. In the vocabulary of Vaishnava belief, the commitment of worldly belongings to Krishna was a particularly meritorious form of *seva.* In Jain terminology, merchants gave concrete expression to the principle of *ahimsa* through patronage of *panjrapols.* In effect, *sheths* translated through religious giving some of their financial capital, to which a stigma might be attached if it were either allowed to accumulate visibly or exchanged for personal possessions, into symbolic capital valued throughout high-caste society, thus generating personal authority.[22]

Because of the importance of sacred giving in high-caste society, temple building tended to cluster in the core neighborhoods of the city. In 1935, for instance, there were forty-eight Hindu temples and eighteen Jain temples in Gopipura alone. Vadifalia had thirty-eight. In the outskirts of the city, Sagrampura, Salabatpura, and Rampura, by contrast, had ten, ten, and three, respectively.[23]

It would serve little purpose here to reconstruct the entire gift-giving activities of specific Surti firms. There has not been a substantial businessman in the history of the city who has not left some evidence of his generosity on behalf of his family's deities. What is important to note, however, is the tremendous diversity and the vast geographic range of some merchants' gift-giving patterns. The Chakawala family, which maintained a banking firm in Surat during the late eighteenth century, apparently saw no contradiction in building a temple to Shiva in the village of Katargam while donating thousands of rupees in *seva* to Vaishnava deities.[24] The Travadi family, wealthy Brahman bankers around the turn of the nineteenth century, built shrines scattered across India and a major temple to Balaji in Surat, which still stands today.[25] Manekchand Jhaveri, a Jain jeweller of the late nineteenth century, built rest houses for pilgrims and hostels for Jain students in Surat, Bombay, Kolhapur, Ahmedabad, Ratlam, and numerous other

centers where Jains traded and worshiped.[26] Even merchants who began to develop an interest in secular philanthropy rarely abandoned sponsorship of diverse religious causes.[27] At the onset of World War I, Vaishnava and Jain religion remained a sphere of activity largely outside the control of the colonial state, one very much shaped and controlled by local *sheths*.

Mahajans *and* Shethia *Roles in Surat*

While such patterns of religious munificence are common to Hindu commercial communities all over India,[28] merchant culture in Gujarat distinguished itself by the importance given to collective institutions known as *mahajans*.[29] In Brahman-Vaniya society, these organizations constituted a form of corporate activity that far surpassed the endogamous unit in importance. They proved resilient in the face of late nineteenth-century conditions, surviving shifts in the world economy and the imposition of the British legal order. For Hindu and Jain *sheths* alike, the *mahajans* were often critical arenas in which authority was generated and perpetuated.

Mahajans are known to have existed in Gujarat for at least eight centuries.[30] They apparently developed anywhere in the region the problems of commercial interaction and social control became too complex for individual *jnatis* to handle. In Surat the first *mahajans* formed early in the city's history. East India Company records from 1669 refer specifically to a "councill" of local Vaniyas known as the "Mahager," which organized eight thousand traders to leave the city in protest against the proselytizing activities of a Muslim *qazi* (judge).[31] Unfortunately, the English were not sufficiently concerned with the internal workings of Gujarati society to provide us with much understanding of the structure and day-to-day activities of *mahajans* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet from the occasional references available, *mahajans* appear to have been important institutions around which merchants repeatedly organized themselves.

While historians of Gujarat have tended to agree that *mahajans* are significant to study, there has been little consensus about the actual nature of the organizations. Ashin Das Gupta has insisted that *mahajans* were essentially social organizations whose membership was confined to narrow groupings (such as castes or religious sects) and whose functions were primarily sociocultural rather than commercial.[32] Michael Pearson, Dwijendra Tripathi, and M. J. Mehta have viewed these institutions as business organizations whose main purpose was to secure the commercial interests of a body of traders.[33] The evidence from Surat suggests that both approaches draw a distinction between economic and cultural institutions that did not exist in practice; each ignores the

extent to which commercial and social preoccupations interpenetrated and reinforced each other in the culture of high-caste Hindus and Jains. The main concern of *mahajan* leaders was with minimizing threats to *abru* in both its interlinked senses—social honor and economic credit. Each organization attempted to manage the collective integrity of the group by formulating, then enforcing, codes of behavior that covered a broad spectrum of Brahman-Vaniya life. Each restricted behavior that could prejudice the position of the whole, thus promoting a more stable sociocommercial environment in which individual families could pursue greater security, profit, and prestige. In short, *mahajans*, like other high-caste institutions, were enmeshed in the politics of reputation.

Occupational Mahajans

There were two types of *mahajans* in Surat. First, there were occupational *mahajans*, guild-like structures of all the traders in a single line of business. Second, there was the Samast Vanik Mahajan (the *mahajan* of all Hindu Vaniyas), also known as the Hindu Mahajan by the early twentieth century.

Occupational *mahajans* existed in most prestigious lines of commerce. During the late nineteenth century, the city's *sharafs*, *jhaveris* (silver dealers), merchants in cotton, grain, and sugar, and numerous other sets of traders each possessed their own organizations. Some apparently had existed for many decades, while others formed when businessmen in a specific trade felt the need for organizational structure. Ghee merchants, for instance, formed a guild in 1913 in order to control commerce in adulterated ghee, most probably in response to new municipal measures which threatened to punish sellers of the inferior product.[34] Existing records are not sufficient to judge the lifespan of the average guild. A few may have been impermanent bodies whose vitality depended on the initiative of individual leaders or the perception of some threat to the collective interests of a set of traders. Rather than see each guild as an entity lasting many generations, it is probably more profitable to view the *mahajan* as an organizational model that leaders of the mercantile community invoked repeatedly in generating formal institutions to manage problems of business.

Membership in most occupational *mahajans* crossed the lines of caste and sect. In 1899 even some Muslim merchants belonged to the guilds of the sugar and cloth traders, though they were a distinct minority and had little voice in decision making.[35] Generally a few *sheths* dominated the affairs of the organization. Formal leadership often belonged to the head of a specific family, who often passed the title on to a son. When the son was not of sufficient financial and moral standing, how-

ever, members might replace him with someone more worthy. Usually several other reputable merchants also exercised influence over the decision-making process. In most cases for which there is evidence, members deferred to this informal "council" of magnates by backing proposed measures unanimously in meetings.[36]

Occupational *mahajans* certainly performed a wide range of commercial functions. Perhaps their primary purpose was to control who could practice a certain trade. When the ghee merchants' guild formed in 1913, its *sheths* issued written notices to merchants outside the city that they should trade only with guild members, they warned that members might be expelled or otherwise reprimanded for dealing with nonmembers, and they set up rules requiring approval of all new members.[37] In some guilds, a fee was required of new applicants, perhaps as much as 300 or 500 rupees.[38] Obviously such restrictions provided a certain degree of security to participants in a guild against excessive competition. The organizations rarely tried to control prices, though they did attempt on occasion to check wages paid to artisans. E. Washburn Hopkins, an American Sanskritist whose study is a rich though not unproblematic source on Gujarati *mahajans*, suggested that an employer who wished to entice craftsmen to work for him by offering higher wages had to "ask the guild about it and abide by their decision."[39]

Sheths of the *mahajans* set holidays and established and enforced standards of business practice, threatening violators with fines and even expulsion. Each guild kept steady pressure on its members to uphold their business agreements. When a merchant failed in business, the guild might investigate his business dealings to determine the reason for failure. According to Hopkins, "If it is found that he has failed dishonorably, he is dropped [i.e., expelled]; if honorably, the creditors accept a part of the debt and help him to tide over his difficulties when he repays all."[40] The public knowledge that a guild might bring its sanctions to bear on unscrupulous dealers or offer financial help to members who had fallen into debt contributed to the integrity of the entire body of traders.

The guilds also settled trade disputes, sometimes in efforts to prevent potentially embarrassing conflicts from spilling over into the courts. Since *abru* depended so greatly on maintaining the secrecy of business dealings, traders were anxious to avoid having their disputes settled by outsiders—particularly in public forums beyond the community's control—and regularly resorted to the *mahajans* for arbitration. Refusal to accept the *sheths*' decision—for instance, by refusing to make payments to an aggrieved party—could result in ostracism.[41] In effect, the *mahajans* tried to protect the economy of trust from being over-

whelmed by a commerce based on contract and courtroom. The possibility of filing bankruptcy in British courts probably made some inroads into the ability of the *mahajan* to enforce its judgments, but guild involvement in dispute settlement was still the norm at the turn of the century.

But while occupational *mahajans* were critical to the maintenance of commercial morality, they also played a vital role in the promotion of local religious life. Every guild linked itself publicly with some sacred institution of importance. Each collected a cess, called *lago*, on the trade of their members and passed the proceeds on to the important Vaishnava and Jain shrines. In Surat, guilds controlled by Jains tended to forward their proceeds to the city *panjrapol*.[42] The sugar traders' *mahajan* sent its cesses to Mota Mandir, the leading Vaishnava shrine in the city, and compelled even its Muslim members to contribute.[43] In fact Hopkins asserted that the system of collecting cesses was so "perfect" in Surat that members of *mahajans* rarely gave money to any charity directly.[44] This was no doubt an exaggeration, but the cesses of the *mahajans* were a major source of income for many religious institutions in the city.

The powers *mahajans* possessed were indeed formidable. In mild offenses, such as the nonobservance of a guild holiday, a *mahajan*'s leaders might impose a fine of several hundred rupees. In more serious cases, a member could be expelled, an action that was economically ruinous and socially catastrophic. According to Hopkins:

> When a member is . . . cut off from the guild, he may be ostracized from the caste. In the latter case he becomes a social pariah, more wretched than a village dog. But even if one is only cast out of the guild, one is often *ipso facto*, outcasted. In the country, such an outlaw is debarred from all social recognition. No man will work with him or for him, nor will anyone serve him, no broker will act for him, no servant will remain in his house. The carpenter, the baker, the confectioner, the blacksmith, the tile-maker, the very potter, lowest of the lowly, refuse to take his orders, deliver goods to him, or perform any service for him at any price. Caste here has yielded entirely to the guilds.[45]

Thus, through expulsion, a family could even lose its identity as a member of the community. Such steps were potentially drastic, yet apparently members considered them necessary to protect the integrity of the whole trade. Only with this necessary *collective* base of reputation acquired through participation in the *mahajan*'s affairs could the merchant family firm cultivate its own *individual* prestige and credit in the community through such actions as temple donations and prestigious marriages.

The Samast Vanik Mahajan

Like many other Gujarati cities, Surat also had a greater *mahajan* which embraced families belonging to a wide range of occupational groups. Scholars have often referred to this as a "city" or "city-wide" *mahajan*. Hopkins even suggested the analogy of a chamber of commerce.[46] But if Surat's larger body is at all typical, such terminology is of limited usefulness. This organization certainly enjoyed a broader authority than the individual guilds and could organize large numbers of traders to act collectively, but it did not cut across caste or religious boundaries in its membership. Descent rather than occupation appears to have been the chief criterion for inclusion. The institution was entirely a Vaniya organization, composed, according to one account, of forty-one Hindu Vaniya *jnatis*.[47] Though most families who participated in its affairs were involved in trade, a number of educated professionals and government servants belonged as well. Jains and non-Vaniyas, on the other hand, did not belong. The Jains, however, had their own multi-*jnati* organization, similar in many respects to the Hindu Mahajan, known as the Jain Sangh. The hereditary leader of this later organization was the head of the Parekh family of Nanavat, and was called the Nagarsheth.[48]

The formal leader of the Samast Vanik Mahajan was the Mahajan Sheth, a great magnate who acted as a headman in all meetings of the organization. In the late nineteenth century, the position of Mahajan Sheth had been held hereditarily for at least several generations, perhaps back into the seventeenth century, in the family of Bhagubhai Dwarkadas.[49] The only other formal office was that of a priest or clerk (*gor*), whose chief function was to invite the Vaniyas to collective gatherings. But a few wealthy and respected *sheths* with no hereditary position were also prominent leaders in the organization. Among the more notable participants in early twentieth-century sessions were the Mahajan Sheth, Ishwardas Jagjivandas Store, Thakordas Balmukandas Modi, Vithaldas Khandwala, and Tribhuvandas Popawala. Decisions were generally arrived at by the consensus of these great *sheths*, then unanimously approved by the larger body of members.[50]

In Gujarat such greater *mahajans* tended to play a role in handling community issues that single guilds and *jnati panchayats* were unable to manage. Because of the breadth of their authority, they were particularly valuable in settling conflicts outside the bounds of guild and *jnati*. They regularly arbitrated trade disputes between members of different guilds.[51] They were also involved in resolving tensions with artisans. According to Hopkins, high-caste merchants lived in fear that craftsmen, who had their own guilds (*panchs*), might band together against individual traders. Such conflicts with low-status persons could produce both economic harm and social humiliation. But by joining together with Vaniyas practicing many different trades, businessmen could usu-

ally thwart such resistance with a counterboycott that would prevent the artisans from receiving their daily necessities. The threat of such action, Hopkins reported, was usually sufficient to cow most craftsmen into submission.[52]

On the basis of the evidence from Surat, however, the regulation of inter-*jnati* social intercourse (*vahevar*) among the Vaniyas was as significant a function of the Samast Vanik Mahajan as the resolution of trade disputes. The organization attempted to enforce rules of appropriate Vaniya behavior by controlling such matters as commensality, marriage, and participation in its own affairs. The Hindu Mahajan particularly sought to limit *vahevar* with those of inferior status or doubtful integrity. In 1900, for instance, a faction within the Dasha Jharola Vaniyas protested that some members within their *jnati* had eaten with the Pancha Vaniyas, with whom the *mahajan* did not allow social intercourse. The *sheths* of the *mahajan* fined the offenders 751 rupees, compelled them to undergo a purification ceremony, and warned that refusal would mean that no true Vaniya could ever eat with them or marry their daughters. In the short run, this step assured the complainants that they would not be stigmatized by the actions of their caste fellows.[53] In the long run, it produced greater compliance with group norms among all the families concerned. The *mahajan* also considered the applications of local merchants to sponsor communal feasts, taking into account the moral character of the potential sponsor and the satisfactoriness of the arrangements he proposed for the occasion.[54] In 1911, after members of untouchable castes entered the rows of feasting Vaniyas during a communal gathering, in effect polluting all present, it was the leaders of the *mahajan* who took precautionary steps to ensure that similar incidents did not recur.[55] Occupational *mahajans* would have been ill-suited to the regulation of these ritual matters, since no single guild embraced the full range of persons affected by such decisions.

Like the occupational *mahajans*, the Samast Vanik Mahajan was closely linked with local religious institutions. The Mahajan Sheth, for instance, served as trustee of the *panjrapol*. Many of the organization's activities revolved around devotional service to Mota Mandir and its *maharaj*, the leader of the Vallabhacharya sect in the city. The *mahajan* organized feasts to honor the *maharaj* on religious holidays and on other special occasions, such as his marriage and sacred-thread ceremonies.[56] Vaniya families often vied among each other for the honor to host the *mahajan*'s celebration. In the early twentieth century, when a succession struggle in Mota Mandir threatened to divide the local sectarian hierarchy, leaders of the *mahajan* stepped in as arbitrators to prevent the conflict from spilling into the courts.[57]

Leaders of the *mahajan* viewed themselves as upholding a consistent

set of ethical standards for the Vaniyas. But because they were constantly involved in adapting the *dharma* to new contexts, they in fact often reinterpreted principles of collective morality. One example of this is the organization's treatment of overseas travel. In the eighteenth century, Vaniyas had settled as far away as the Persian Gulf.[58] But during the nineteenth century, high-caste Hindus throughout western India had come to treat travel overseas as permanently polluting. When Mohandas Gandhi, a Modh Vaniya and the future leader of the nationalist movement, announced his decision to go to England for higher education in 1888, the *sheth* of his caste in Bombay informed him: "Our religion forbids voyages abroad. We have also heard that it is not possible to live there [England] without compromising our religion. One is obliged to eat and drink with Europeans."[59] Gandhi defied the order and was "excommunicated." But as the number of Vaniyas wishing to go abroad grew, community leaders were forced to reconsider their position. In 1906 the Samast Vanik Mahajan of Surat reached a formal compromise: those who had gone overseas could resume *vahevar* with other Vaniyas if they would undergo a ceremony of purification upon their return.[60] Vaniya organizations elsewhere in western India soon followed suit. At a time when the issue was creating disabling conflicts in some castes, the *mahajan*'s ability to adapt to changing realities without seeming to abandon a *dharma* that community members regarded as immutable certainly contributed to its continued vitality.

Records of the activities of Hindu *sheths* during the famine of 1899–1900 provide a different sort of evidence about the adjustment of the *mahajan*'s leadership to the danger facing the community and its values. The famine, perhaps the most severe in the region since the seventeenth century, posed a serious short-term crisis for high-caste residents, threatening to destabilize the social order and to undermine critical Brahman-Vaniya concerns. The price of grain rose sharply, and reports of riots in other western Indian cities raised the specter of unrest in Surat. In the countryside, hunger and disease killed many and left thousands of children without parents. Christian missions began to take large numbers of orphans into their care, thus arousing concern among Hindus about losing ground to the religious creed of their rulers. The scarcity of water and fodder caused the death of many cattle.[61]

The *mahajan* adopted several measures to meet the crisis. It founded a Hindu orphanage that competed with the Christians for homeless children. It augmented the activities of the *panjrapol* in order to care for the growing number of sick and starving cattle. Perhaps most significant, it pressured the grain merchants to stop all exports from the city. Even merchants with previous agreements to sell to agents out-

side Surat were ordered to break their commitments under the threat of *mahajan* sanctions. This measure checked further inflation in grain prices and defused the potential for serious urban unrest.[62]

The ethical conceptions which informed merchant action in this instance have strong parallels with the notion of "moral economy"—the idea that needs of local consumers must be met before those of the market—that E. P. Thompson discovered in his studies of eighteenth-century England.[63] The *mahajan,* in bringing a halt to grain exports, took on a responsibility that in precolonial times had been assumed by the state but that the British had abdicated in the interest of free trade. The motivations for this action were clear: the famine was a threat to high-caste society and to the identity of the Brahman-Vaniya traders as persons who placed *dharma* above their personal profit. Interference with the free operation of the market effectively confirmed the ideal that wealth should not be pursued at the expense of the community's integrity.

The most dramatic context for *mahajan* action was that of resistance to government policy. In precolonial times, there are repeated references to its ability to organize social protest among the Vaniyas, most dramatically, in 1669, when it attempted to prevent the Muslim *qazi* from interfering with Hindu religious practice and in 1795, when it took similar actions to pressure the British into providing the community with protection against Muslim rioters. In the nineteenth century the *mahajan*'s *sheth*s organized local Vaniyas to protest imposition of Bengal Standard weights and measures on the trading community in 1848, to oppose the establishment of a license tax on local businesses in 1878, and to petition the government of India in 1892 against the Age of Consent Bill prohibiting marriages of children under 12.[64] In each case merchants associated with the *mahajan* resorted to group action when they perceived a common threat to the security of the community and its values. In all but the last instance, they imposed sanctions against those who failed to follow *mahajan* directives, thus ensuring nearly universal compliance.

One strong theme running through many of these activities by both forms of *mahajan* is conflict management. As men who handled large sums of money and as members of families that enjoyed a privileged position in local society, merchants may have been especially susceptible to involvement in disputes—disputes with each other, disputes with lower-status persons, and disputes with state officials. But open conflicts could undermine the image of simplicity, austerity, and discretion so critical to maintaining their image of social respectability. By managing disputes before they became serious, a *mahajan* could hope to preserve the low profile of all its members, combatants and noncom-

batants alike. The effectiveness of *mahajans* in accomplishing this end may account for the willingness of local merchants to submit to the often-severe forms of discipline that these organizations gave out.

Given the fragmentary character of evidence before the 1880s, it is difficult to estimate whether the authority of *mahajans* eroded over the course of the nineteenth century. Existing documentation clearly demonstrates, however, that these organizations remained important politically in Surat up through World War I despite the growth of global capitalism, the colonial legal system, and the municipality. Through these bodies, high-caste Hindus and Jains were to a great extent successful in preserving some autonomy from the demands of the British Raj. Political discourse in the inner arena of *mahajan* activity continued to focus on questions of *dharma*, familial *abru*, and community integrity. Public and colonial discourse, by contrast, proved to be a very poor vehicle for articulating most key Brahman-Vaniya concerns well into the twentieth century.

SOCIETY IN THE OUTLYING NEIGHBORHOODS

Hindu Communities of Middle and Low Status

Outside the central areas of the city in neighborhoods such as Begampura, Sagrampura, Navapura, Salabatpura, and Mahidharpura were Hindu communities of artisans and petty traders collectively known in Gujarat as "Ghanchi-Gola."[65] Together with noncaste Hindus—the so-called untouchables—these communities constituted more than 50 percent of the city's population. Included in this category were a number of caste groupings such as the Golas (traditionally rice pounders by profession), the Ghanchis (oil pressers), Khatris (weavers), Darjis (tailors), Suthars (carpenters), and Kanbis (who worked mostly as artisans). Many of these collectivities contained within them several distinct *jnatis*. Harry Borradaile, a British official who compiled caste rules for the whole of British Gujarat in 1827, reported more than two hundred distinct endogamous units living in Surat. Most of these were groups of middle- and low-caste background who lived in the *puras*.[66]

Members of Ghanchi-Gola communities often had a rather ambivalent relationship to the high-status merchants and government servants. Many of their families had established clientage ties with individual Brahman-Vaniya, Parsi, or Daudi Bohra families as dependents who performed services such as washing and stitching cloths, pounding rice, or repairing furniture for their high-caste patrons; as artisans who obtained their raw materials and sources of finance from the merchants to whom they sold their finished goods; or as petty traders who borrowed heavily from Vaniya moneylenders. Such ties often led to the

development of long-standing affective relationships in which patrons provided their clients important services—loans, gifts on special occasions, small jobs during periods of business slump—in return for the labor or interest payments of the client. The Ghanchi-Golas also participated to a certain extent in a common religious life with the upper castes, celebrating the same festivals and worshiping in some of the same temples. But there were also serious tensions in these relationships. High-caste residents tended to regard the Ghanchi-Golas collectively as beyond the pale of respectable society, and they worried about the threat to the local moral order which they believed these communities posed. Members of the lower and middle castes engaged in a variety of non-Brahmanic practices, such as meat eating, alcohol consumption, and widow remarriage, that served implicitly to contest and mock high-caste normative standards. As a whole they acquired a reputation for unsavoriness and unruliness that evoked upper-caste disdain and anxiety.[67]

In contrast to high-caste society, where elaborate social networks developed beyond the ritual unit, Ghanchi-Gola society assumed a somewhat cellular quality. The tight corporate character of its social organization appeared quite clearly in residential patterns. Often members of individual *jnatis* clustered in small, well-defined localities. The Golas (who today prefer the name of Ranas), composed of three different *jnatis*, lived in exclusive enclaves in Navapura. Tailors, washermen, basketmakers, and potters all had their own streets where they lived and plied their wares. Khatris and Kanbis also tended to live among their *jnati* fellows, though often their houses were interspersed with those of people belonging to two or three other castes.[68] In moments of crisis, such as the salt tax riots of 1844 and the license tax riots of 1878, members of the different communities joined together in protest involving violence, suggesting perhaps a latent consciousness of class that was not apparent in everyday social and institutional life.[69]

Small, closely-knit corporate groupings, often the *jnatis*, served as the most important basis of political organization in the outlying neighborhoods. Almost every collectivity possessed its own *panch* (caste organization), which often performed both as a regulator of ritual affairs and as a craft guild. The *panch* occupied a far more vital place here than did the *panchayats* of the upper-castes. Its leaders, the *patels*, were often hereditary headmen, who set codes of conduct within the group and acted as intermediaries with other groups. Early twentieth-century religious reformers who attempted to propagate vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol regarded the conversion of the *patels* as a first step to the success of their movement.[70] British civil servants, who tended to view the Ghanchi-Gola communities as remote and impene-

trable, relied almost exclusively upon the *patels* to maintain social order.[71] Colonial recognition of these headmen strengthened their dominance in middle- and low-caste society as well as the salience of caste to social organization in the outlying localities.

The corporate character of Ghanchi-Gola communities was also reinforced in economic practice. Many of these groups were associated with one or two occupations, or a limited number of them, which might be termed the group's "traditional" occupations. The Ghanchis controlled oil pressing, milk selling, and trade in firewood. Most Kumbhars were engaged in the manufacture and sale of pottery. The Golas were commonly involved in rice pounding. Even in the more complex industries, such as the manufacture of silk and *jari*, specific communities concentrated on processes involved in the production of a single commodity. The traditional occupation was rarely the exclusive source of employment for all members of the group, but it was quite common for a single community to monopolize a specific trade or craft. This tendency toward group control of certain occupations was not always undermined by economic change. During the early twentieth century, the Golas, who had been displaced by the mechanization of the rice industry, began to move into winding *jari*. By 1930 they had attained near total control over winding operations, displacing the once-dominant Muslims, in effect establishing a new "traditional" occupation. By building such monopolies, artisans and petty traders could limit competition from outsiders and develop relatively stable and dependable relationships with the few laborers they hired from among the ranks of their caste fellows.[72]

The traditional occupation often assumed a *dharmik* character for its members, though the sources of Ghanchi-Gola *dharma* relied less on Sanskritic scriptures than on the oral traditions of individual groups. Many communities had collective myths justifying their control of their craft. The Golas, for instance, claimed to have originally been Rajputs from Mewada who adopted the name *gola* (menial servant or slave) in order to protect themselves from the fearsome god Parashuram. In hiding, Shiva, their protector, gave them the mortar and pestle of the rice-pounding trade with which to make their livelihoods.[73] Since this myth established a time when the community had had higher ritual status than the present, it implicitly contested high-caste attempts to attribute to the group's members an inborn inferiority.[74] At the same time it attributed a sacred quality to rice pounding.

One responsibility of the community *panch* was to preserve this *dharmik* trade for group members. Often the organizations set strong rules preventing the communication of artisan secrets to outsiders and reinforced these with caste sanctions.[75] They also attempted to spread

work among members during times of depression, thus regulating competition and ensuring the survival of as many family firms as possible. The *patels* of the *panch* could go so far as to set wage rates and working hours for artisans and to order which days would be observed as holidays in the traditional occupation. The *panch* also settled occupational disputes.[76] On occasion the organizations acted as craft unions, pressuring merchants to accept certain payment levels and employment practices.

Ritually the *panch* and its headmen were involved in enforcing marriage and commensal rules essential to group integrity and solidarity. *Patels* levied fines against violators of group norms and had the power to ostracize those who engaged in especially offensive behavior.[77] They also raised funds for regular communal feasts, which, among some middle-caste groupings, could surpass the dinners of the Vaniyas in conspicuous expenditure.[78] The *patels* often retained control of the caste vessels employed on such occasions and the right to use them.[79] Little collective money was apparently spent on *seva* to religious shrines. The British legal system, which had codified caste laws for dozens of local *jnatis*, tended to confirm the authority of the *patels* over community funds in the courts.

Headmen of artisan and petty-trading communities did not simply uphold static codes of behavior, but like the Hindu Mahajan, reinterpreted their group's *dharma* over time. Frequently the sense of community solidarity derived from cultural practices that implicitly denied Brahmanical norms. Nevertheless, attempts to raise status within the social hierarchy by adopting high-caste practices were common in many of these communities. Such "Sanskritizing" efforts inevitably depended upon the support of group leaders. In 1906 headmen among the Khatris and Golas made *bandobast* (enforcement of moral codes by threat of social sanctions) against the consumption of alcohol.[80] Only four years later a Gola leader organized a meeting to promote temperance, compassion for animal life, and general "improvements of morality" among his community. Those present at the meeting sang *bhajans* composed by *bhakti* saints and listened to the preaching of holy men on abstinence and vegetarianism.[81] Once the *patels* abandoned their backing of such ventures, however, the movements tended to fall apart.[82]

The periodic rise and fall of Sanskritization efforts among petty-trading and artisan communities suggest that headmen were continually involved in balancing the specific traditions and preoccupations of their groups against Brahman-Vaniya values. High-caste ideology provided certain ethical standards that middle-caste groups might choose to espouse in attempts to contest their positioning in local society. But even in the midst of such movements, *patels* exhibited a concern for

maintaining the distinctiveness of their community, insisting that all members subscribe to new behavioral norms. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were few signs of the weakening of group solidarities among middle-caste communities. The *jnatis* of middle and low status thus continued to retain a cohesiveness absent in the organization of the higher castes.

Muslim Communities of Surat

Surti Hindus constituted less a unified community than a series of subcultural groupings that drew upon a partially shared idiom as they defined their separate identities. The social distance between Brahman-Vaniya and Ghanchi-Gola proved a major barrier to any form of concerted behavior by local Hindus as a whole. At no point during the nineteenth century did various Hindu groups come together in any communally based action. The same could also be said of the local Muslim population. Though only about one-fifth of the city's population, the Muslims of Surat possessed a diversity that rivaled that of Hindus. Muslims, too, belonged to a large number of kin-based communities, most of them demarcated not only from non-Muslim groups but also from each other. Different Muslim communities lived in distinct pockets scattered around the city, usually in the outlying *puras*.

One general line of differentiation in local Muslim society was that between "immigrant" Muslims—that is, Sunni Muslims claiming origins in West Asia—and "convert" Muslims, who acknowledged descent from indigenous Hindu communities.[83] The immigrants included the families that had once been associated with the top ranks of the Mughal administration. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Muslims from Turkey, the Red Sea, and Persian Gulf had been among the wealthiest of Surat's traders.[84] With the decline of Asian shipping, some abandoned Surat, while others took up less lucrative professions. Families belonging to the old Mughal nobility, on the other hand, retained much prominence under colonialism. In 1900 some of these families were still known by the titles of their late eighteenth-century ancestors: the Nawab of Surat, the Nawab of Bela, the Kazi (judge), and the Bakshi (army paymaster).[85] These families survived for the most part on land-holdings and pensions granted by the government in exchange for their continued loyalty.

Many of the convert Muslim communities, by contrast—most notably the Patani Bohras, who were Sunni Muslims, and the Daudi Bohras, who were Shia—continued to play important mercantile roles, some among them managing firms with considerable international business. There were also communities of Muslim petty traders, such as butchers

and cart drivers, and groupings of Muslim artisans, such as the Momnas and the Tais, both of whom did weaving. Most of these collectivities recognized indigenous, non-Muslim forebears. Many were as tightly corporate in character as their counterparts among Hindus of middle caste. Some even had their own neighborhoods or streets, where the majority of their members lived.[86]

The leading immigrant families retained a strong collective identity as the former ruling group and attempted to keep alive the memory of their past prominence through preserving at least the illusion of the old *sharif* culture, a syncretic style of life that had developed out of the interaction between foreign Muslim and indigenous Hindu elites in the Mughal courts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[87] The *sharif* ideal which they sought to emulate stood in stark contrast to the austere traditions of the Brahman-Vaniyas. Members of the old nobility lived in palaces often beyond their means to maintain; they secluded female family members, spent considerable sums on clothing and jewels, patronized Urdu poets, and organized public displays with great military pomp.[88] They also maintained a tradition of patronizing Indian Islamic institutions, such as mosques, *dargahs* (shrines to Sufi saints), *madrasas* (centers for Islamic learning), burial grounds, and festivals. Particularly important for their "symbolic investments" were the shrines of the Edrusi Sayyids, Muslim spiritual leaders who had migrated to Gujarat from West Asia during the sixteenth century and who had maintained a hereditary influence in the region ever since. The Edrus family had a reputation for Islamic scholarship and the ability to perform miracles. Its headmen offered personal and spiritual advice to the families associated with them and were important in mediating local conflicts. Their ties with the old Mughal nobility, occasionally bolstered by marriage, remained close into the twentieth century.[89]

The old Mughal elite did not, however, develop an identity as leaders of the Muslim community until the later nineteenth century. In 1795, after rioting had broken out in the city, the local *nawab* essentially disclaimed any responsibility for restoring order among his coreligionists, asserting to the Surat chief, "You will be pleased, Sir, to reflect that the excesses of a riotous mob are not to be controlled at pleasure by anyone. In the case of a person committing violation of what they deem sacred, the Mussalmans assemble of themselves and consider themselves as subject to the will or authority of no person."[90] Such a rhetorical position stands in sharp contrast with that of men from the same families a century later, when their status in colonial circles depended upon casting themselves as "natural" leaders able to control their coreligionists. The *nawab*'s appraisal, however, was certainly a realistic one.

The immigrant elite carried little weight among the majority of Muslims in the city, particularly among those who did not trace their origins to the Islamic territories outside South Asia.

Structurally, many of the nonimmigrant Muslim groupings were not unlike Hindu *jnatis*; in fact many were caste groupings that had converted to Islam en masse in pre-Mughal times. A few like the Patani Bohras, a convert group which had migrated to Surat from northern Gujarat, had an organization known as a *jama't,* a functional equivalent of the Hindu *panch.* The *sheths* of this organization, mostly substantial merchants by occupation, sponsored communal feasts on wedding occasions and religious holidays and closely supervised community morality, punishing violators of group norms with fines and social ostracism.[91] They also acted as trustees of the community's charitable property, which included a mosque, some land, several burial places, and a hall for group feasts. The butchers too had a particularly strong organization. On special holidays, it auctioned the right to keep a single shop open and used the funds to finance its own Muslim shrines.[92] Though the leaders of Muslim communities were not as concerned with retaining control over commensality or with enforcing absolute endogamy as their Hindu counterparts, they clearly shared an interest in maintaining the ritual boundaries of their descent-based groupings. Islam no doubt provided much of the repertoire of symbols critical to group identity in all these communities. But in each case, this was a specific form of Islam, often colored by the group's pre-Islamic traditions and by continuing contact with non-Muslims.

The wealthiest and most tightly organized of all Muslim communities in Surat was the Daudi Bohras. The Bohras were descendants of Hindu petty-trading groups who had been converted to Islam by Shia Ismaili preachers after the eleventh century. Their prosperity grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as many built successful businesses through intracommunity networks of trust and shared resources. By the late nineteenth century many had established comfortable livings as shopkeepers dealing in commodities such as hardware, books, spices, sweets, groceries, and hides throughout western India. Some were extremely wealthy dealers in piece goods, with businesses stretching to Thailand, China, Arabia, and South Africa. Very few attained high proficiency in English or moved into the literate professions.[93]

The Bohras were sharply set apart from the other Muslims. Both men and women wore clothing and maintained appearances which distinguished them from all other residents of the city. Almost all lived in a single large neighborhood in Navapura. The most critical marker of the Bohras' ethnicity was their special form of religious practice. They

continued to observe many "Hindu" traditions such as the holding of community feasts and the observance of Divali as the beginning of their accounting year. Their faith was an esoteric doctrine, distinct from the beliefs of other Islamic groupings. A small, clearly defined set of religious specialists alone had access to the scriptures of the community, which were written in a Gujarati laced with Arabic words. At the apex of the religious hierarchy was the *da'i,* the spiritual head of the community. The *da'i* was believed to be inspired directly by the Imam-in-seclusion, whom the Daudis considered to be living in a place of concealment. Each *da'i* appointed his successor before death, in theory through revelation from the Imam.[94] Mastery over the scriptures and other ritual qualifications proved more critical than heredity in determining succession, though sons well educated in community tradition often did assume their fathers' places. Since the office of *da'i* carried with it tremendous authority over the laity, disputes about the legitimacy of succession sometimes led to bitter conflict in which the losing factions, ostracized for their dissent, founded offshoot communities. The British courts usually backed the cause of the established *da'i* and his followers against these challengers.[95] As a result the authority of the religious hierarchy may have been stronger under colonial rule than ever before.

The powers and social responsibilities of the *da'i* and the priesthood were indeed considerable. They controlled a vast charitable administration that touched the life of every Daudi. Each member of the community had to pay seven different types of taxes to maintain this establishment; particularly wealthy individuals often made additional personal donations of great value.[96] With these funds the Bohra leaders built and kept up mosques, *madrasas*, burial places, and community halls. They also provided social welfare services for the poorer Bohras and the families of previous *da'is*.[97] The tight control of the Daudi establishment generally left members little room to develop independent giving patterns; it insisted that all donations be channeled through the collective leadership.

The priesthood also closely regulated the social behavior of group members. Every Daudi tied him- or herself personally to the *da'i* by taking an oath of allegiance at the age of puberty.[98] The oath articulated the doctrines by which the oathtaker was supposed to live, stressing particularly loyalty to the Imam. Approval of the religious specialists was essential to holding any critical ceremony in the life cycle, particularly marriage. The leadership enforced a rigid endogamy, certainly as strictly as any Hindu community. Those who violated community law were punished with fines or, in extreme cases, with social ostracism as well, much as in the Hindu *jnatis*.[99]

A few wealthy merchants also exerted considerable authority within the community. Daudi *sheths*, however, built up their positions largely through close association with, and patronage of, the religious leadership. It was commonplace for *sheths* to hold community banquets to honor the *da'i* on important ceremonial occasions—for instance, important weddings or his return to Surat from his frequent travels.[100] As among Hindu merchants, *sheths* with a history of giving to community charities enhanced not only the social position of their family but also their capacity for raising credit. In a grouping that often managed to contain economic transactions within its collective boundaries, one's reputation within the community assumed great significance.

For the Bohras, Islam provided the vocabulary of motive critical to attaining and maintaining authority. Their Islam, however, was a special product, one that had been given a unique shape by leaders of the community over the centuries. In a sense, the Daudi Bohras exemplified the pattern of boundary maintenance among Muslims of Surat. Muslim groups in the city had forged many distinct subcultures by integrating their own traditions with universalistic Islamic symbols such as the mosque and burial ground. In effect each had its own Islam which group leaders employed more to sustain the separateness of their community than to participate in an international religious brotherhood. Muslims, like Hindus, were a series of communities in which membership was based first and foremost on shared descent.

The Parsis

A final but critically important community in Surat was the Parsis. Though numerically small—Parsis were only 6 percent of the city's total population in 1872—members of the group exerted great influence in urban affairs because of their wealth and, in the nineteenth century, their education. Most lived together in relatively exclusive neighborhoods located in Ranitalav, Nanpura, and Rustampura, outside the core of the city.[101]

Followers of Zoroaster, a religious teacher in sixth century B.C. Persia, the Parsis had migrated to the Indian subcontinent from Persia to escape incorporation into Arab Islamic polities after the seventh century. They apparently lived in western India as agriculturalists for hundreds of years before moving into Gujarati cities to take jobs as artisans and traders during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the early eighteenth century a few established large fortunes by working as brokers for the East India Company and its officers.[102] As company activity shifted to Bombay, Parsis were among the first to emigrate to the new port, where they often became successful as compradors of British firms, as independent merchants, and eventually as industrialists.[103] Of

those who remained in Surat, some continued as merchants, petty traders, and artisans. The most successful, however, were those who took up positions in the early British administration and the new professions.[104]

In India the Parsis had always formed an extremely cohesive community, characterized by forms of religious belief drawn from the teachings of Zoroaster, an ethos of philanthropy, and strong communal organizations. Parsi religious behavior may have been highly affected over the centuries by patterns of Hindu worship, yet it retained its distinctive character. To European observers, its most exceptional features were the special place of fire in religious observance (usually mistaken for fire worship) and the practice of leaving the dead in *dokhmas*—open towers exposed to the elements and to scavenging birds—practices which had no parallel elsewhere on the subcontinent. Early travelers were also impressed with the charitable traditions of the group. John Ovington, who visited the city during the mid–seventeenth century, remarked of the Parsis, "They shew a firm affection to all of their own sentiments in religion, assist the poor, and are very ready to provide for the sustenance and comfort of such as want it. Their universal kindness, either in employing such as are needy and able to work, or bestowing a seasonable bounteous charity to such as are infirm and miserable; leave no man destitute of relief, nor suffer a beggar in all their tribe; and herein so far comply with that excellent rule of Pythagoras, to enjoy a kind of community among friends."[105] Though the ideal was never realized as fully as Ovington supposed, public giving did assume a very prominent place in Parsi culture and in generating community leadership. Forms of giving regarded as particularly auspicious were the building of Atash Beherams, where the Parsis performed their religious rites, and of the *dokhmas*, both of which were essential to the sustenance of any Parsi grouping.[106] Also important was the patronage of *dharmashalas*, where poor, elderly, and sick community members could acquire food and other care; wells, where all members of a Parsi neighborhood could obtain water; and dispensaries.[107] Much is unclear about how these early institutions were administered. Though the Parsis of the early eighteenth century had their own *panchayat,* modeled in part after Hindu *panches*, it is not known how extensive the authority of this organization had become.

Under British rule, however, preexisting forms of communal life became increasingly institutionalized. During the late eighteenth century, prominent Parsis in Bombay, eager to eliminate customs that smacked of Hindu influence and to extend control over their community fellows, began to press the East India Company to acknowledge the legitimacy of a formal community leadership. In 1818 the leadership of the

Parsi Panchayat was fixed in the hands of eighteen community members chosen in a public meeting. A few select families quickly moved into positions of special influence in the Panchayat. At first the organization tended to be very active, when the interest of these families was at a peak, followed by great lulls, when their interest flagged. The Panchayat never did develop the importance of Hindu communal institutions in regulating the social conduct of group members and had lost this function altogether by the 1860s. But the organization remained an important focus of community politics since it controlled a large and growing charitable establishment. By sponsoring hospitals, educational institutions, and academic scholarships, the Panchayat and other Parsi institutions won for the group a progressive image among British civil servants, while community identity grew increasingly sharp. Many of the old Parsi families continued to exert authority in the Panchayat into the twentieth century.[108]

Early in the nineteenth century the Bombay Panchayat was responsible for supervising charitable funds in Surat. In 1841, however, the funds had grown so large—especially after Parsis donated huge sums in response to the fire of 1837—that the Bombay organization decided to appoint a local *panchayat* of nine leading notables from Surat to act as trustees for communal properties. Institutionalization of Surat's Parsi leadership continued in the years that followed. In 1865 the provincial administration established the Parsi Matrimonial Court for Gujarat to advise the judges of district courts in all matters concerning marriage and succession, whose members were chosen by the government on the recommendation of leading Surti Parsis.[109] By the turn of the twentieth century, the Parsi Panchayat had come to control communal properties worth many *lakhs*, and the number of community organizations in the city had further multiplied. Those who enjoyed influence in Parsi society invariably participated in one or more of these formal institutions. Often the families which had been prominent before the establishment of the Parsi Panchayat were able to preserve and even to enhance their authority by becoming trustees in the new organizations. The Modi, Vakil, Cooper, and Taliyarkhan families enjoyed positions either on the matrimonial court or Panchayat virtually as an hereditary privilege.

One family that attained informal recognition both within the community and among the British as enjoying a sort of headmanship of the Parsi community by the nineteenth century was that of Rustomji Khurshedji Modi. This family claimed the position of *davar,* or spiritual leader of the Parsis, and traced its descent back to kings of Persia. In the mid–seventeenth century a leading figure in the Modi family had built a *dokhma* in Surat and had financed a number of other charitable

institutions. His successors continued his philanthropic legacy. In the early 1700s the Modis acted as representatives of the Parsis in negotiations with imperial authorities, a role they continued to enjoy for the next two hundred years. Both the *nawabs* of the eighteenth century and the British during the nineteenth recognized the status of *davar* and consulted the Modi on matters affecting his community. By the nineteenth century the family head also served as chair of the meetings which nominated new members of the Panchayat and Parsi Matrimonial Court, using this position to ensure that his own candidates won appointments. During the 1890s, rising figures within the community tried repeatedly to challenge the position of the family but found the way blocked by the Modis' continued prestige as well as by their close ties with British civil servants.[110]

Imperial rule had much to do with the growing formality of Parsi organization. More than any other group, the Parsis had a history of close interaction with the British, a history that antedated colonial rule in the city. A bureaucratic structure to administer Parsi affairs was one product of this interaction. Some Englishmen, observing the great strength of formal institutions devoted to community welfare in the community, came to the conclusion that the Parsis were the most westernized of the Gujarati communities. But the process of institutionalization was not simply an outgrowth of Western norms and organizational structures. Parsi leaderships had developed these institutions not to merge themselves with their rulers, but rather to maintain and enhance their control over community affairs and to preserve a distinct Parsi identity. The hardening of group solidarity in the nineteenth century was as much a product of the continuing Parsi concern with maintaining the well-being of community members as it was of a British drive to regularize administration. The Parsis remained a collectivity where membership was defined by birth and where leaders came from a relatively small number of prestigious families who commanded the deference of lesser families. Indeed, reviewing the historical record, one suspects that the inner, community-oriented domain of Parsi politics expanded in significance with the growing wealth of individual families and the increased resources of communal organizations.

CONCLUSION

Any attempt to make universal generalizations about processes of social continuity and change over three hundred years applicable to all local communities is bound to founder in a city as diverse and complex as Surat. But with the evidence presented in this chapter and the last, we can dismiss one set of hypotheses that could be offered as an explana-

tion for the emergence of public culture in the later nineteenth century: that the development of capitalism, the colonial administration, and the British legal order had produced so fundamental a transformation in local society as to create an entirely new class system in the city, and that the new classes that had formed as a result embraced public politics as a means of expressing their newly emergent class interests. Such a model for understanding the development of civic politics makes sense only if one set of relationships ill-suited to capitalism steadily gave way to another, more functional set. Yet in the inner domain of local politics, the Surtis continued to reproduce a social order in which men and women remained concerned primarily with questions of family status and reputation, in which older idioms of authority met the challenges posed by changes in the larger world, well-established leadership styles such as that of the Hindu *sheth* continued to carry considerable weight, and collectivities based upon descent often retained the cohesion necessary to enforce a wide range of group norms. Most people located their own preoccupations in these various inner arenas, not in their wider religious communities and certainly not in the almost anonymous civic arena. The structures and idioms of local social life persisted, not because of any inherent intransigence or reluctance to change among the Surtis, but because these social forms remained relevant to the material and psychic needs of the population.

Before World War I, the civic arena grew not so much at the expense of preexisting economic and social forms as in addition to these forms. It formed another layer of politics—an outer domain—governed by a different terminology and moral principles, one that existed above and outside the inner sphere. To account for this puzzling development, we need to explore the political and symbolic interactions between indigenous elites and their rulers and the context of domination by outsiders to the city. The next chapter begins this process by looking at the relations between subject and ruler before the emergence of British colonialism.

FIVE

The Outer Politics of the City

Throughout Surat's history—from the sixteenth century into the twentieth—local merchants and other residents lived in states dominated by outsiders. Despite their considerable wealth and prominence, the great *sheths* never attempted to assert rulership of their city directly. Instead they abdicated authority to alien conquerors, in part because Hindu and Jain mercantile values proscribed open involvement in political rule and the use of military might, in part because the few attempts (largely by Muslim merchants) to develop an armed capability were quashed in early stages. Warrior communities with origins outside Surat, with only a handful of local agents but usually able to call upon formidable armies, consistently controlled the city's governance. During the early sixteenth century Surat was ruled by the Muslim kings of the Gujarat Sultanate. In 1573 the Mughals captured the city and made it part of a vast agrarian empire covering most of northern India. When this empire finally crumbled during the eighteenth century, independent Mughal princes, Maratha warlords, and the traders of the English East India Company vied with each other for political dominance and control over the port's revenues. Only in 1800 did the English take firm command and again integrate Surat into a larger polity that supported itself by extracting revenue from the countryside. The Company Raj, transforming itself eventually into the British Empire, lasted until Indian independence in 1947.

Domination by foreign overlords put local elites in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, there were considerable advantages to be had from aligning oneself with the powerful outsiders. Protection of personal households and of commerce, jobs in the district administration, and opportunities for profit all flowed from catering to the needs of the nobility. But the rulers were men with very different social back-

grounds from those of local residents and held very different cultural norms. Often they placed heavy material and symbolic demands on the business communities, straining key indigenous values. Alien rule meant that merchants had to be continuously preoccupied with potential threats from above to their social and commercial reputations. The outsiders' near-monopoly over the instruments of force gave them the power to destroy any resident, whether at the whim of an individual nobleman or under authority of the law.

In such an uneasy environment, concerns with sustaining and enhancing wealth and family status, with extending trade, and with promoting religious values—the essential preoccupations of the merchant moral world—propelled indigenous elites into protective relationships with the political authorities, relationships that were based upon moral principle as well as material advantage. A fundamental characteristic of these relations was the symbolic dependence of the local magnate on the outside nobleman. Surti businessmen saw their political position as one of deference, even of supplication. As one merchant put it in an appeal to the British in 1918, evoking the powerful Hindu metaphor of the mute and helpless cow reliant on its benevolent master, "The people are cattle and the king is the keeper of the cattle compound."[1]

Since deference is so critical to understanding the relationship of local elites to their rulers, it is worth exploring this concept a bit further. In contemporary societies conditioned by the ideology of equality, deference is thought of primarily in terms of the inferiority it expresses: by meekly expressing fealty to a superior, a weaker party confirms the stronger's power. In practice, however, deferential relationships generally have a transactional character. As an underling offers supplication to an overlord, he or she may also be establishing claims to patronage or protection. With the statement "The people are cattle and the king is the keeper of the cattle compound," Surti businessmen certainly acknowledged the authority of the British Raj but at the same time held colonial civil servants responsible for the well-being of local merchants by stressing the latter's reliance on imperial favor. Surti notables regularly conferred legitimacy upon outside rulers through such symbolic acts, but implicit in these efforts were attempts to compel the ruling group to recognize certain obligations to its client-subjects and to honor the principles upon which it claimed its rule was based. A moral component was thus injected into relations inescapably based upon inequality. As a result, despite the cultural boundaries demarcating the governors and the governed, flexible mutual expectations developed, ones that were constantly subject to renegotiation. In a climate of great political uncertainty, deferential behavior became an important survival mechanism for the merchants and their culture.[2]

While urban magnates consistently sought to establish deferential relationships with their rulers, the shape in which they communicated their submission altered over time. In general *sheths* and other influential figures in the city expressed obeisance in forms that carried weight with the powerful outsiders. They participated in ritual acts meaningful to their political overlords, they engaged in forms of institutional life which the overlords valued, and they grounded their appeals for justice in ideals and symbols drawn from the overlords' own ethical system. When one ruling group replaced another, or as the ideology of a particular ruling group changed, local elites, concerned that they receive continued political patronage and protection, adjusted their manner of addressing their overlords.

Elite groups in Surat were thus always bilingual. They may have built up their statuses in the inner arenas of the city by drawing upon political idioms specifically associated with their own descent-based groupings, but they also involved themselves in the construction and reconstruction of an *outer* arena of politics where they interacted more closely with their rulers. This arena had its own distinct modes of expression and its own institutional forms; even the grounds of conflict and debate were distinct. Those who participated in this arena may have contended specific actions of the ruling group, but they did so largely within languages derived from the political overlords. In essence, as they accepted a set of alien standards with which political claims could be made and negotiated, local elites built up both the hegemony of their overlords and their own subordination within a larger empire.

MERCHANTS AND MUGHAL RULE

In Mughal times, it was usually the actions of individual noblemen rather than the policies of the imperial center that posed the greatest threat to mercantile life and culture. To use Michael Adas's apt term, the seventeenth-century political system in Surat was a "contest state."[3] In this form of polity, a king may claim a monopoly of authority in theory, but in practice alternative power centers easily develop as a result of poor communication and limited control over officials and local lords. Owing to the relatively weak integration in such polities, intense rivalries tend to develop within the ruling group, and a premium is placed on personal, patron-client ties rather than on bureaucratic loyalties. Under Mughal rule, the *mansabdars*—the small group of soldier-officials ultimately responsible for collecting revenue and maintaining the armed forces—constantly competed among themselves for status, wealth, and power, both in the imperial capital and in far-flung district

headquarters.[4] In Surat intranobility conflicts may have been particularly acute. There was a governor of the city and a governor of the port, as well as a handful of other officials only nominally subordinate to either, all with poorly delimited powers and areas of jurisdiction, all operating semi-independently of the center in their day-to-day decisions. The emperor generally intervened in the affairs of his local officials only in extraordinary situations.

The ability of the *mansabdar*s to operate free of imperial constraint under most circumstances produced great insecurity for local merchants. The noblemen regarded the exaction of money, jewels, and other valuable items as a legitimate prerogative of power, and their efforts to accumulate personal fortunes at the expense of the local trading population were rarely checked by their superiors. Repeated seizures of property could cause not only immediate material damage to a merchant's enterprise but also long-term harm to his reputation as one who honored his commercial and community obligations. When inspired by Islamicizing impulses, members of the ruling group could directly endanger Hindu and Jain religious sensibilities. In 1669, for example, the *qazi* (judge) of Surat forcibly converted several Hindu *sheth*s to Islam, circumcised at least one Hindu scribe (who committed suicide out of disgrace), and threatened to destroy local temples, all apparently in an effort to propagate Islam.[5] Merchants were obviously anxious to avoid such indignities, which could permanently affect their personal honor and their religious practice.

Often traders were able to frustrate members of the nobility by means of what James Scott has called "everyday forms of resistance"—small individual acts of resistance such as nonpayment or incomplete payment of taxes, false compliance with state regulations, the maintenance of secrecy about the size of family resources and the character of a firm's business practices, and, on occasion, even the more serious step of migration away from the city.[6] Concealment appears to have been a particularly important defense mechanism. The Vaniyas of Gujarat had a special reputation for evasiveness in speech and action. Merchants hid their wealth, living in spartan households with minimal furnishings, so that it was often impossible for any outsider to estimate the size of their seizable or taxable assets. Seventeenth-century English travelers attributed the simplicity of the merchant way of life not to Hindu and Jain traditions of nonpossession and self-abnegation but to the fear of Mughal exactions.[7] It seems possible, however, that ascetic traditions informed and legitimized silent forms of day-to-day struggle against the nobility's demands and its culture. The merchants' methods of blocking the nobility's efforts to extract greater resources from the community were pervasive in local society and cumulatively placed seri-

ous constraints on what members of the ruling group could accomplish in extracting resources from local businessmen. And usually they did so without creating the danger of more direct confrontations. In Gramscian terms, we may think of these forms of resistance as reflecting a "contradictory consciousness"—a fragmented outlook that denied the legitimacy of certain demands made by the Mughals and that provided the merchants with a sense of identity and solidarity in opposition to the ruling group but that did not constitute a fully articulated challenge to the state or to sentiments of allegiance and subordination.

Everyday resistance, however, was rarely sufficient to check the worst threats to mercantile wealth and respectability. To ensure that they would not be subjected to extraordinary pressures, *sheths* often needed to cultivate powerful patrons from among the overlords, as one seventeenth-century representative of the English East India Company observed:

> There is another thing above all the rest an impardonable offense; for a banyan or rich broker to grow wealthy without protection of some great person, for it is so mighty a disquiet to the governor, that he can never be at ease till he have seen the bottom of this mischief; which is always cured by the transfusion of treasure out of the banyans into the governor's coffers; which makes them humble suitors for the umbrage of any of quality to screen them from this violence.[8]

The need to cultivate such ties and to mitigate potential conflict with individual noblemen drew commercial magnates into the politics of the Mughal durbars (courts), both in Surat and in the imperial capital. Merchants apparently attended the court of the city's governor with some regularity; occasionally, they sent delegations to petition the emperor in Delhi or Agra. A few especially prominent traders apparently even kept regular representatives at the imperial capital.

Entry into *darbari* politics necessitated participation in symbolic activity meaningful to the ruling group, in particular, the offering of tribute. Among the nobility, a gift, either cash or jewels and other precious items, was expected whenever an inferior sought access to a superior, whether the inferior was a noble calling upon the emperor at court or a subject attending the local durbar of a district officer.[9] "In Asia," noted the Frenchman Bernier, "the great are never approached empty-handed."[10] A donor, in making his presentation, expressed his allegiance and subordination to the nobleman. The gift was often accompanied by ritual bowing that symbolized the sense of humility and obeisance that a supplicant was supposed to feel in the presence of a great representative of the empire.[11] The Mughals could and did reject presents that they believed did not adequately reflect the position and

resources of the presenter. Acceptance of tribute, on the other hand, implied recognition of the donor's status as a person worthy of association with a nobleman. Often a semistable, *personal* alliance with a noble patron developed that could prove of considerable advantage to the merchant client. In the short run the recipient of tribute conferred honors on the giver with a special robe, turban, or shawl.[12] In the long run, more material awards might ensue: exemptions from certain duties, recognition as a community leader in negotiations, and even access to the resources of the state.

As the records of European travelers attest, traders in Surat regularly offered tribute to their rulers. Apparently any audience at all in a nobleman's court required some gift. "The first time one goes to wait upon the Governor [of Surat]," wrote the Frenchman Thévenot, "as they come they lay before him five, six or ten rupees, everyone according to his quality."[13] Indigenous elites seem to have accepted the necessity of gift giving when they visited the durbars. Such occasions were opportunities to express their loyalty, their deference, and their recognition of the nobleman's authority in return for personal favors, protection, and whatever honors he might decide to bestow. According to one local history, the banker Atmaram Bhukan once avoided arrest by presenting the Mughal governor with a platter filled with two thousand gold coins. In making this gift, the merchant reportedly stated, "I am your child. Kill me or save me." The governor not only pardoned the *sheth* for his crime but also gave him a special robe and turban.[14] One early seventeenth-century account suggests that merchants even gave the emperor considerable sums of cash to ensure that the slaughter of cows did not take place.[15] Members of the English East India Company, too, engaged in the politics of tribute, though they tended to regard the gifts they gave in Surat itself as bribes and usually expected an immediate favor in return.[16]

Local *sharafs* also lent huge sums to imperial officials, often with little expectation of repayment. Like gifts, these "loans" bestowed authority on the recipient because they served implicitly to acknowledge the nobleman as a legitimate ruler. To the Mughals loans were essential to finance military campaigns, meet the costs of administration, and maintain their expensive ways of life. In 1627, local merchants, including the members of the East India Company, provided thousands of rupees to Shah Jahan as the prince tried to gather resources for establishing his claim to the throne.[17] In 1657, Shah Jahan's son, Murad Baksh, obtained loans of half-a-million rupees from the wealthy Jain businessman Virji Vorah in an attempt to seize power after his father had fallen ill.[18] In normal times, Vorah and other merchants like him apparently bankrolled both local governors and noblemen in the imperial capital.

The merchants no doubt saw loans to the nobility as an investment in good relations with those in power or likely to attain power. Virji Vorah himself was at one point so influential with the local governor that he was able to prevent all the city's traders from dealing with the East India Company.[19]

By giving gifts and providing loans, mercantile elites contributed mightily to the material and symbolic reproduction of the Mughal ruling group. Present giving was a major source of income and finance for the nobility; it also served to constitute the authority of local official and emperor alike. Those who gave tribute in turn generated personal identities as important subjects of powerful *mansabdars*. The representatives of great firms also served other critical functions in the Mughal state: as land-revenue and customs collectors, as negotiators between the government and the local community, and even as advisers on policy. Such evidence confirms Karen Leonard's argument that the support of mercantile elites was essential to the Mughal kingdom. Indeed, because of the merchants' contributions to imperial power, it is reasonable to consider the seventeenth-century state as a Mughal-Bania order, though one must be careful not to construe the relationship between *mansabdar* and businessman as one of equality.[20]

Even in those rare instances when they engaged in collective action against oppression by a nobleman, the traders remained subordinate to the Mughal elite. Much merchant protest involved seeking alternative patrons among the ruling group, including the emperor himself, rather than a complete rejection of Mughal authority. In 1669, when Hindu and Jain traders opposed the proselytizing efforts of the city's *qazi*, representatives of the traders' *mahajan* appealed first to the city's governor. When the governor's help proved ineffective, the merchants, eight thousand in number, shut down their shops, left the city en masse for the neighboring town of Bharuch, and appealed to the emperor, Aurangzeb, to intervene. A servant of the East India Company reported, "Several addresses have bin made to the king, each party [that of the merchant and that of the *qazi*] using all probable measures to justify itselfe to the prejudice of the other." The merchants no doubt observed the advice of the English that they make "their *generall humble request* to the King" (emphasis added). Each delegation certainly gave tribute. In Bharuch, the traders even briefly entertained offers from the governor of Ahmedabad in Gujarat that they settle in his city under his protection. Finally, after almost two months, they received an edict (*farman*) from Aurangzeb assuring them of their safety and of greater religious tolerance. According to company accounts, they returned to Surat immediately and resumed their commerce, "to the great satisfaction of the Governor, officers, and all the inhabitants of the town

[presumably with the exception of the *qazi*]."[21] Thus, in both the merchants' resistance and the emperor's response, personal deference and personal favor had been sustained. The business community's behavior stayed within the bounds of what the Mughals considered legitimate action. One might consider it, by Mughal standards, to be a form of constitutional protest that followed certain well-accepted conventions of registering dissent, one that highlighted the injustices of an individual nobleman without calling the legitimacy of the state into question.

Unfortunately, few petitions written by local elites survive for the historian to examine the language used in addressing the ruling group. One major exception comes from a movement of merchants against Dutch actions in 1704. In this case, a set of Muslim and Hindu merchants, led by the Patani Bohra trader Abdul Ghafar, attempted to pressure the Mughal governor of the city into forcing the Dutch East India Company to honor an agreement (*muchalka*) to compensate all Surti shippers who were victims of piracy in the Arabian Sea. The governor, Najabat Khan, had canceled this agreement after the Dutch promised to provide escort for Indian ships willing to form convoys. The merchants objected, insisting that the Dutch should compensate even victims who did not participate in the convoys. They first sent protest missions to the Mughal court. At the same time, they put pressure on the governor in his durbar to cancel his earlier pronouncement in a petition that argued:

> During the last twenty years nations of hatmen [i.e., Europeans], robbed merchants of about 140 *lakhs* of rupees in goods and bullion. Although we were never wanting, in spite of that loss, to show all politeness to these peoples, they have not refrained from creating disturbances. They are lacking in submission to the king and go beyond the way of the *muchalka* which they have signed. They have further incited their fellow hat-wearing Portuguese to create even greater difficulties. It would be well if these people submit to the king of the Muslims and abide by the agreements they have themselves made. In that case the people of God can carry on their trade in peace and the way to Mecca become safe. But in case the contrary takes place, the trade of the hatmen must be forbidden and hindered in His Majesty's lands. Only then will they at long last in the fortunate administration of the king tire of such conduct and return to an observance of the *muchalka* which they passed. Then the trade of the town and the way to Mecca will come to prosper. But in case anyone entertains feelings to the contrary and designs to put the aforesaid *muchalka* aside and those nations of hatmen are no longer submissive, then it will certainly come to pass that this city with its Muslims will be ruined and the hatmen will be strengthened.[22]

While the phrasing of the petition undoubtedly reflects its translation into a European language, it nonetheless is quite useful in showing

the Surtis' ability to appropriate the idiom of the Mughal polity. Obviously, the key points the merchants tried to drive home were the nobility's obligation to safeguard Surat's trade and an Islam in danger, and the failure of the Dutch to be appropriately submissive to the emperor. They evoked both the Mughal sense of responsibility for the empire's Muslim subjects and Mughal expectations of obeisance as they asserted their own claims to justice. Implicit in the document was the assumption that the authority of the emperor was beyond question. But the petitioners were not bowing obsequiously to the imperial nobility. Rather, they were employing Mughal principle—including the importance of deference itself—to challenge the policies of a specific official. In short, the merchants used the language of the rulers to question the legitimacy of actions taken by a member of the ruling group. Eventually, one may note, Abdul Ghafar and his followers apparently were effective in having Najabat Khan removed from office. One suspects that the Bohra merchants' missions to the court and his appeal to Mughal notions of justice were instrumental to this accomplishment.

In sum, the local magnates' need for greater control over their environment led them to enter the discursive system of the durbar. By engaging in gift giving, by demonstrating their deference to noblemen, and by translating their concerns into Mughal conceptions of justice, they effectively established relations of clientage with members of the nobility. But while accepting and acknowledging their position of inferiority to the ruling group, the merchants negotiated the terms of their relations with their overlords, making possible the perpetuation of their own moral communities, the extension of their commerce, and the development of a more secure political influence.

THE RISE OF THE ANGLO-BANIA ORDER

During the eighteenth century, even as elite groups in the city continued to submit to the nobles of the Mughal Empire, the Surtis began to participate in and indeed to construct the hegemony of another set of outsiders: the traders of the East India Company. The ascendancy of the British in Surat was not accomplished in a single act of conquest but in a series of smaller advances spread over nearly a century. The most important of these occurred in 1759, when the company assumed jurisdiction over Surat's castle, leaving Mea Achan, the local *nawab*, in control of the city administration; and in 1800, when the English retired a successor of the *nawab* through treaty, thereby establishing control over the government of the city and the surrounding countryside.[23] At each stage in the expansion of its power, the company sought and received the support of local magnates. Indeed, there were times when the ex-

pansion of British power was as much a response to indigenous pressures as it was an outgrowth of a drive for empire issuing from the English. As Lakshmi Subramanian has argued, colonial rule was an Anglo-Bania creation—or even more accurately, the joint creation of the company and a diverse urban notability.[24]

The reasons for the development of alliances between the city's mercantile elite and the East India Company are now—after the nationalist haze which once clouded history writing on India has cleared—not hard to fathom. Traders had traditionally tried to obtain sponsors from among powerful extralocal authorities for protection against plunder and other threats to mercantile life. As the British capacity to employ force increased early in the century, some *sheths* looked to the company not only as a source of profit but as a means to check the *nawab*. Then, as the company developed into the premier military power along the western Indian coastline, more and more local notables sought to cultivate its favor.

To some commercial magnates the British had indeed become more valuable patrons than their Mughal counterparts. Having lost most of their external sources of income during the eighteenth century, the old nobility began to turn the screws more tightly on the mercantile population.[25] The *nawab*'s administration also proved ineffective in maintaining local law and order, which became evident when it failed to prevent a series of riots directed against prominent merchants during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. In contrast, the English had interests that overlapped with those of local businessmen. The company and its officers, like the Surti traders, desired to remove the personal exactions, town duties, and barriers to the flow of currency that had been instituted by the *nawabs*. Company rhetoric decrying local instability and calling for "free trade" undoubtedly struck a responsive chord among many local businessmen.[26] At sea the British offered protection for ships carrying goods under the English flag but allowed those with no special ties to the company to fall prey to Maratha pirates. Not surprisingly, larger and larger numbers of Hindu, Muslim, and Parsi traders actively sought English protection during the second half of the eighteenth century, a service that the factors were often quite eager to provide.[27]

The company's ascendance did not at first produce a major dislocation in local notions of authority. British merchants eased into their roles as overlords, only gradually abandoning preexisting rulership styles and discourses of power. For a time the government of the company exemplified the contest-state model as well as—or better than—its Mughal predecessor. Central authority in the organization resided thousands of miles from India, its structure within the subcontinent

was often poorly demarcated, and its officials in Surat generally regarded their posts as opportunities for personal enrichment. As soon as they began to exercise political clout, Englishmen began to fashion themselves as local potentates similar to the *nawabs* and to seek tribute from merchants eager to acquire protection and expand trade.[28] Most significant, the company maintained its formal subordination to the Mughal emperor, acquiring *farmans* from the imperial capital to sanction each advance in its political status in Surat and flying the Mughal flag alongside that of the English over the city's castle.[29]

As a result, local elites only partially altered the rhetoric and ritual of their approach to rulers as British power grew. Gifts and loans remained nearly as significant for cultivating ties with servants of the company as they had been with the *mansabdars*. Already by 1740 reports of taking presents had become so commonplace that the board of directors had complained: "We can never expect a faithful discharge of the trust reposed in our servants if they allow themselves to be corrupted by Divali bribes or New Years gifts, let them be called by what name soever, the thing is the same."[30] Gifts retained their significance in Surat much longer than in Bengal, not being formally abolished until 1797 and probably continuing well after that.[31] Near the close of the century, the chief of the factory at Surat annually entertained prominent local persons at Christmas—much as the *nawab* did at the time of important Islamic observances. Each visitor was expected to bring some token of his submission and received a small gift in return.[32] Relations between local magnate and company servant continued to be conducted in a profoundly personal idiom.

Loans also continued to be important for building special relations to the English. Because of its perpetually weak financial state, the company readily accepted transfers of capital from Surti bankers, even as it transformed itself from a trading organization into a territorial power.[33] The bankers willingly offered large sums of money, recognizing that they would acquire powerful political patrons. At one point the head of the firm of Atmaram Bhukan provided the English with 500,000 rupees deposited with him by the defeated Maratha chieftain, Peshwa Bajirao II. The company in turn offered the banker the title of *Sardar* (which he refused) and sent him two golden parrots and a letter of commendation.[34] The Surati *sharaf* Arjunji Nathji Travadi, also previously a banker of the Marathas, furnished more than 3 million rupees in loans to the English armies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for which he was eventually rewarded with the grant of a large village.[35] Travadi's tremendous influence with the British became evident at his murder trial in 1801, when, under pressure from high-ranking officials, the court found him guilty but sentenced him

only to pay eight thousand rupees for a new jail, to distribute cows among Brahmans, to support the widow of the deceased, and to loan the company 1 million rupees. For some time, the *sharaf* also ran the revenue administrations in two districts, regularly using the funds for personal investments before they were forwarded to the government.[36]

In short, Indian traders accommodated themselves to the expectations of powerful Englishmen, but Englishmen were developing their own models of ruler-subject relations along the lines of well-established Indian precedents. Nonetheless, petitions from the trading community provide firm evidence that local *sheths* were also adjusting themselves to some notions of authority that were peculiarly English. The most interesting of these documents stem from an episode of rioting that occurred in 1795, when Muslim artisans and petty traders had attacked merchant neighborhoods, injuring several businessmen, causing *lakhs* of rupees in property destruction, damaging Hindu images in local homes and temples, and in one household, stripping female members of their clothes and jewelry. For Hindu and Daudi Bohra merchants, the rioting was a serious threat to their safety and their familial honor; they also feared that their commercial credit would suffer if the general perception of their ability to keep property safe were affected. The failure of Mughal administrators to secure order led the merchants and other leaders to view the company as their main hope. Both leading figures of the local *mahajan* and the *da'i* of the Bohras sent petitions to the company pleading for greater guarantees of their safety.[37]

In their petition the *sharafs* of the *mahajan* appealed directly to the material concerns and the moral conceptions of the English traders. Much of the document stressed how local commerce would be damaged and the company's profit ruined if steps were not taken to restore order quickly. One might be tempted to regard such blatant calls to self-interest as acts without any "cultural" content, but similar rhetoric would have been inappropriate in petitions either to Mughal princes a century earlier or to British civil servants a century later. Clearly it was the company's self-image as a trading institution that made appeals like this so likely to have an impact. The merchants also invoked specifically English notions of justice. They reviewed the history of the company in Surat, suggesting that it had attained control of the castle in 1759 "at the request and advice of the inhabitants for the general good and quiet of the place [Surat]" and that the English at that time had promised to provide the merchants with protection against local governors in return for their cooperation. They went on to state:

> Your petitioners as the principal trading inhabitants of this city have ever considered themselves as under the special protection of the Company, referring themselves to the English chief for the time being even in ordi-

> nary occasions amongst themselves relative either to money disputes or to businesses of their caste and religion, but particularly applying to him in cases of grievance, or apprehension either committed by the Mogul Governor, or any of his numerous officers who all sanction their actions with his name, and whose oppression would soon dispeople the town unless awed and checked by the authority of the English chief as governour of the Mogul's castle which alone gives him a general right of protection to all the inhabitants.[38]

The merchants pleaded that they were "unarmed and unguarded," "relying wholly for their safety on the protection of the English flag." The *da'i* similarly argued, "I have ever considered myself under the protection of the flag of the hon'ble English Company" and urged that he be granted a guard for the "protection of my life and property."[39]

Thus, by asserting in effect that the position of the English was based on a historically established social contract between the merchants and the company, by appealing to the self-image of Englishmen as guarantors of the "life and property" of Indians against the despotism of the Mughals, and by evoking the symbolism of the flag, the merchants and the *da'i* tried to convince the Bombay government that it should provide greater protection and possibly to assume direct control over the city. The petitioners effectively translated their concerns with the preservation of their *abru*, the maintenance of social order, and the security of their religious practice into the terms of the company's professed values and then attempted to hold the European traders to these principles. The tone of the documents was both openly deferential and covertly demanding. Evoking their sense of dependence on foreign overlords, the merchants implicitly staked a claim to expanded patronage during a period of crisis. This rhetoric carried great persuasive power, bolstering the position of factions within the company that had long been clamoring for an extension of British power in the city. Only five years later, this takeover took place.

The activities of the merchants and the *da'i* after the riots illustrate how alliances between the British and important local leaders had emerged well before the formal achievement of British rule. These alliances were founded not only on shared political and economic interests but also on a partial cultural accommodation of Surti magnates to the value system of the newly rising power. Thus, even before formal colonial rule had begun, local elites had developed forms of ritual and rhetorical expression for access to the British. In the process they had defined their own identities as dependents of the Europeans and had accepted partially alien values as the standards by which political rulers were to be judged. Through acts of deference located in the moral conceptions of their new overlords, they had effectively transferred their allegiance from Mughal rule to the British Raj.

CONCLUSION

The examination of precolonial politics points out a final set of problems with the transformational interpretations that have been used to interpret cultural change during the later nineteenth century in India. Local conceptions of political authority and justice were not simply static values based upon primordial identifications, waiting to be shaped by Western education and European capitalism. Instead, elite appropriation of the language of the ruling group had been going on in Surat for several hundred years before the emergence of "public" politics. Local magnates had consistently been involved in developing political principles and allegiances beyond those required in the immediate politics of their descent-based communities as they attempted to cultivate alliances with outsiders who governed their city. The chief factors which contributed to shifts in the political culture of this outer domain were changes in the notions of authority espoused by the overlords who dominated the city and the creative efforts of the merchants themselves to interpret these notions in specific situations.

The reformulation of elite identities and values which took place in Surat after 1850 thus must be understood as a continuation of this ongoing adjustment to ideologies of the ruling group, not as an entirely new development.

PART THREE

Public Culture

In our language, we have no such word as 'public.' . . . We have no equivalent for nationality or patriotism.

HARISH CHANDRA, INDIAN PLAYWRIGHT

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The Colonial Context

Elites who sought accommodation to the colonial order of late nineteenth-century Surat found themselves in an ideological and discursive context markedly different from the one their counterparts had faced a hundred or even fifty years earlier.[1] Emerging during this period was a new "world system of cultural domination," a set of ideas and assumptions about political authority that often went hand in hand with the more visible spread of empire and the extension of European economic influence.[2] Each of the imperialist powers carried with it to its various colonies and dependencies closely related beliefs asserting the supremacy of Western political and cultural values and institutions over those of Asia and Africa, insisting upon the racial superiority of whites over nonwhites and legitimizing European military, commercial, and political endeavors as a "civilizing mission."[3] The peoples of the newly subordinated societies had to contend with these new languages of empire, whether they chose to reject colonialism or to operate within its confines. For the Surtis it was the British variant of this discourse that became important.

Not all the political languages of Great Britain traveled to its colonies equally well; not all, that is, became incorporated into the "world system." Liberal theory stressed the importance of rational individual judgments, rooted in universal principles and laws, to the constitution of the British polity. But in Victorian England there were a variety of political idioms sanctioning vote purchase, deference to men of influence, commitment to community groupings based upon birth and locality, and intolerance of religious minorities, that is, many of the same values that the British rulers would stigmatize in the cultures of those they had colonized.[4] Among English working people, deprived of

the vote until the late nineteenth century, deference and loyalty to hierarchically defined communities often overrode the languages of class.[5] English politics, too, were multilingual, with different idioms applying in different political arenas. Yet only those paradigms made sacred in the classical texts of political theory, the paradigms believed to embody the "highest" ideals of British civilization, were ever effectively transmitted to India. Missionaries, educators, civil administrators, and businessmen brought to their Indian subjects an image of British politics and society in which "lower" principles had been filtered out and delegitimized.

Late nineteenth-century Indian leaders who wished to influence the workings of empire thus were left with only a few privileged languages with which to bargain, pressure, and cajole their British rulers. These languages issued, as David Lelyveld and Bernard Cohn have suggested, from two sources: (1) a liberal conception of public politics associated with British parliamentary politics and enshrined in liberal political theory and (2) specifically colonial conceptions stressing the heterogeneity of Indian society and emphasizing the critical role of hereditary leaders thought to command the loyalty of specific Indian communities.[6] Implicitly and often explicitly, both confirmed the unequal relations between Britain and India. As indigenous leaderships appropriated these languages of politics and accepted them as their own, even in confrontations with the Raj, they perpetuated cultural forms that would outlast colonialism itself.

PUBLIC DISCOURSE

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the liberal paradigm had been most fervently articulated by men who considered themselves reformers. By late in the century, however, it had ceased to be the exclusive property of those with Liberal party affiliations and had, to a great extent, entered the rhetoric of Liberal, Tory, and Socialist alike. Still the writings of the great liberal thinkers—Bentham early in the century, Mill at midcentury, and Green and Hobhouse at the end of the century—are the best guide to the contours and assumptions of liberal political discourse.

Most liberal theorists explicitly or implicitly viewed the world through a mythological conception of history that attributed to British civilization and the British polity a particular genius but at the same time saw humankind as moving along a shared path termed "progress."[7] This notion—progress—was at once material, political, and moral. First, it suggested the emergence of a society in which unparalleled levels of prosperity had become possible, largely through in-

dustrialism and modern technology.[8] Second, it evoked a sense of movement toward forms of government increasingly founded on individual freedoms. Liberal thinkers viewed the English past as a series of struggles by the people of England to secure liberty against the tyranny of narrow oligarchic elites and the monarchy, struggles which had gradually given shape to a constitutional, representative order and which had freed religious belief, political opinion, and the ownership of property from state interference. Finally, accompanying these changes in the economy and polity, was a shift in consciousness. Commitment to the nation took deeper root, concern with the public good grew steadily, and popular involvement in political affairs constantly expanded. Progress proved to be a convenient scale along which all societies could be measured—and found lacking in comparison with Britain. According to liberal standards, British civilization had attained the highest level of progress; its history defined the road along which other societies would—or at least should—pass. British colonies in Asia and Africa were viewed as being well behind their conquerors in development.

A particularly important term that became entangled in these evolutionary assumptions was "public opinion." As used by philosophers and politicians, this concept generally referred to the assembled opinions of those unfettered by obligations to hereditary elites or communal groupings, and who could thus make "rational" judgments about politics without succumbing to social pressures. In theory, it was autonomous of the state, serving to check the state's workings from outside. Public opinion could express itself in voting, in which case it would come to be "represented" in government in the form of political parties. The representatives of the public, though themselves part of the state, would constantly be responsible to the private citizens who made up their constituencies. Or it could be brought to bear on the state through extraparliamentary forms of action—press campaigns, public associations, and public meetings. Political reformers of the nineteenth century sought to widen the franchise by creating an image of a public that clamored for inclusion in the ranks of the voters.[9] By the end of the Victorian era, public opinion had become the most important arbiter of legitimacy in parliamentary politics. As the political philosopher L. T. Hobhouse declared in 1905: "The conception of popular sovereignty—the principle that the Government should carry out the popular will and be responsible for the manner of its action—would not be openly denied by any party."[10]

A closer examination of political practice in England reveals that advocacy of the cause of the people or the public was always hedged with elitist assumptions. Despite the fiction of universal participation sug-

gested in the term, *the public* rarely denoted just anyone. Usually it implied only those who supposedly possessed the capacity for critical thinking, persons who were free of communal and social bonds that might impair their judgments, individuals who showed a concern with the "public good." Thus, liberal thinkers and British politicians only slowly extended the notion of public opinion to the working classes and women, who, some believed, did not have the autonomy, the interest in preserving civil society, or the experience in thinking about political matters to ensure that their full inclusion in the polity would work to the general welfare of society. Among the larger population, public opinion needed to be cultivated carefully and slowly through the process of "political education." It also needed to be controlled so that it would not run roughshod over the feelings of political minorities. Most important, it should not be allowed to determine directly the workings of government; it had always to be represented by men of superior intelligence and education, persons specially capable of placing the welfare of the whole above their own selfish private interests and who would not fall prey to the sudden shifts in political fancy that characterized the masses.[11]

Given the conceptual limitations placed on the development of a truly participatory order in England itself, it is not surprising that liberal thinkers would have serious reservations about the applicability of representative notions in societies they believed to be at lower stages of development. Even for some of the most democratically minded, "public opinion" existed only in certain kinds of civilizations—those where men outside the state had taken an active interest in politics (i.e., politics of a formal, constitutional, and national character). The evolutionary and ethnocentric assumptions of this doctrine were readily apparent. In "On Liberty," for example, John Stuart Mill employed the analogy of a child's growth to explain his political theories, arguing that these notions applied only "to human beings in the maturity of their faculties." "For the same reason," he argued, "we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage," a category in which he placed most of the world's population.[12] In "Representative Government" he insisted that commitments to parochial and primordial identities characteristic outside the West render a people incapable of self-government:

> One of the strongest hindrances to improvement, up to an advanced state, is an inveterate spirit of locality. Portions of mankind, in many other respects capable of, and prepared for freedom, may be unqualified for amalgamating into even the smallest nation. Not only may jealousies and antipathies repel them from one another, and bar all possibility of voluntary union, but they may not have acquired any of the feelings or habits which make the union real. . . . They may, like the citizens of an-

cient community, or those of an Asiatic village, have considerable practice in exercising their faculties on village or town interests . . . and may yet have but slender sympathies with anything beyond, and no habit or capacity of dealing with interests common to many such communities. I am not aware that history furnishes any example in which a number of these political atoms and corpuscles have coalesced into a body, except through previous subjugation to a central authority common to all.[13]

In the minds of most liberal thinkers, of course, Britain was a society that either verged on or had reached adulthood. Its people possessed, they reasoned, virtually all the qualities that guaranteed liberty and good government: a keen interest in the affairs of government, a preoccupation with maintaining their freedoms against intrusions by the state, a special concern with the public welfare and "improvement," and perhaps above all, a shared national ethos. In a passage that echoed the political grammar of Mill, Hobhouse would attribute an almost mystical homogeneity and consciousness to the British people:

The British nation is a unity with a life of its own. But the country is constituted by certain ties that bind together all British subjects, which ties are in the last resort feelings and ideas, sentiments of patriotism, of kinship, of common pride, and a thousand more subtle sentiments that bind together men who speak a common language, have behind them a common history, and understand one another as they understand no one else. The British nation is not a mysterious entity over and above the forty millions of living souls who dwell under common law. Its life is their life, its well-being or ill-fortune their well-being or ill-fortune. Thus the common good to which each man's rights are subordinate is a good in which each man has a share.[14]

Thus in British political thinking the British public and the British nation were not just a collection of individuals who happened to live on a few islands off the northern coast of Europe; they were a people with a special ethic, a people who had reached an advanced stage of consciousness and who therefore required advanced forms of government. Through such reasoning, it eventually became possible for the liberal intellectuals to conclude that Britain deserved universal suffrage without necessarily damaging elitist qualifications about the applicability of democratic forms of representative government elsewhere in the world.

COLONIAL DISCOURSE

Colonial understandings of India were highly colored by this public discourse. Rather than developing modes of expression that appreciated the richness and complexities of South Asia, the British grounded

many of their judgments about the subcontinent in an alien vocabulary with little foundation in any Indian discourse of politics. Almost inevitably, as a result, they measured India against their idealized conception of Britain and then found their colony wanting.[15] India, agreed Englishmen of widely differing political perspectives, was not-a-nation and its population was not-a-people or not-a-public. Writing in an administrative manual, the late nineteenth-century imperial ideologue John Strachey proclaimed: "There is not and never was any country of India . . . possessing according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious; no Indian nation, no 'people of India' of which we hear so much."[16] In 1910, twenty-five years after the founding of the Indian National Congress, the journalist Valentine Chirol asserted: "That a movement confined to a mere fraction of the population of India has no title to be called a 'national' movement would scarcely need to be argued, even if the variegated jumble of races and peoples, castes and creeds that make up the population of India were not in itself an antithesis to all that the word 'national' implies."[17] The Labor politician Ramsay McDonald could reiterate India's deficiencies as late as 1920: "Here [in England] public opinion touches and emanates from the whole people; its sections represent conflicts in views of national ends. . . . [In India] the mental state of the great masses does not amount to a public opinion, because it is concerned with the small local interests of a population whose world is its village."[18] To a very considerable extent, these comparative assessments reflected a consensus in Euro-American thinking about Asia that was little questioned until well into the twentieth century and has not been thoroughly challenged even today.

What the colonial rulers generally saw in India was a heterogeneous agglomeration of distinct peoples living beside each other but not having any common identity that would make true self-government possible. In a statement that implicitly delegitimized diversity at the same time it claimed to represent the true character of South Asian society, Lord Dufferin, the viceroy of India during the mid-1880s, argued, "This population is composed of a large number of different nationalities, professing various religions, practising diverse rites, speaking different languages, while many of them are still further separated from one another by discordant prejudices, by conflicting sources of usages, and even antagonistic material interests."[19] Pseudoscientific racism, which informed much of late nineteenth-century British thinking about Indians, suggested that there were a variety of "races" on the subcontinent, each with its distinct racial characteristics: "martial" races, especially capable of military activity; "feminine" races, weak, enfeebled, and spineless, but clever at learning and administration; even "criminal tribes" hereditarily prone to criminal activity.[20]

From this starting point, some imperial thinkers drew a series of fanciful conclusions about the character of political leadership on the subcontinent, conclusions that stemmed as much from the logic of public discourse as from any appreciation of South Asian realities: Indians are a diverse people with parochial and primordial commitments; India is thus at a low level of political evolution; peoples in backward societies are not prepared to make informed personal judgments about politics but accept unthinkingly the authority of hereditary elites; Indians are thus under the sway of aristocratic figures who control their followers by virtue of their hereditary status. Hence they could arrive at such understandings as those expressed by Viceroy Lord Lytton in 1876: "Politically speaking, the Indian peasantry is an inert mass. If it ever moves at all, it will move in obedience not to its British benefactors, but to its native chiefs and princes, however tyrannical they may be."[21]

A truly popular and independent government, according to such theories, was impossible on the subcontinent as long as no overriding public or national allegiances existed and as long as Indians failed to develop the independence of thought that representative institutions required. Wrote Ramsay McDonald: "An ignorant people are a subject people, whatever the form of government may be. At the moment, and under existing conditions, 'popular' representation in India would not indicate Indian opinion, but would give rise to practices that would subvert that opinion."[22] Without the creation of a public accustomed to critical thinking, many believed (to the extent they were even able to conceive of the possibility) that true self-government would release all restraints over self-seeking behavior in politics, foster corruption and nepotism, unleash conflicts between regional and religious groups held together now by the British presence, and inevitably result in some form of tyrannical rulership. Usually these assumptions led to the belief that some sort of benevolent despotism was inevitable and that it was better that this despotism be British than Indian. Members of the colonial elite believed that they alone possessed the impartiality, the sense of "fair play," the dedication to justice and duty, to keep the Indians from each others' throats and to run the administration of the country smoothly.

Yet at the same time, civil servants in India itself had to recognize that maintaining the Raj required the collaboration of powerful elite groupings. The foreign ruling group in India formed only a tiny portion (less than .1 percent) of the population of the subcontinent. British administrators tended to conceive of Indian society as impenetrable, something they could never be part of, something they could never perfectly comprehend on their own. Reliance on "native" informants and leaderships with roots in local society was essential. But this in turn necessitated a logic to make sense of the place of these figures within

the colonial order. Two distinct theories arose, though these theories in practice often existed side by side in the thinking of district officers without great dissonance. Both were rooted in British understandings, not only of India, but also of the British past.[23]

In the first theory, great stress was placed on the need to rely on the "natural leaders" of society, the hereditary headmen to whom Indians supposedly maintained a docile obedience. Particularly after the Mutiny of 1857—which many attributed to careless displacement of rulers like the Nawab of Avadh—it became imperative in the minds of many civil administrators to gain the support of those thought to be traditional leaders of society.[24] Bernard Cohn has analyzed brilliantly how the British designed special rituals at the imperial level in order to secure the allegiance of Indian princes and chieftains.[25] At the level of the district, civil administrators made municipal appointments, organized durbars (public ceremonies), and awarded titles in the effort to wed "men of local influence" to colonial rule. Often this meant labeling certain magnates—usually men thought to be the headmen of particular religious groupings—as the local aristocracy or notability. These natural leaders were to represent their distinct communities in dealings with the ruling group.

The theory of natural leadership tended to be most closely associated with imperialists espousing the most racialist positions, that is, those who assumed that Indians were biologically or culturally incapable of ever developing the wider allegiances and political capabilities necessary for self-government. It located Indian society in a backward stage of historical evolution, awkwardly analogous to the time when English society had in theory been controlled by its aristocracy. It generally implied, however, that India was somehow stuck permanently in that stage.

Advocates of the second theory generally agreed that Indians lacked the sense of public spiritedness needed for self-government, but insisted that, with time, some could be "trained" or "educated" to assume responsible positions in public affairs. This perspective became increasingly attractive during the later nineteenth century as colonial rulers became more committed to the ideology of improvement and turned to the municipalities and district local boards in order to raise funds for building sanitary works, roads, and schools. A certain sector among the ruling group—often referred to as the liberal imperialists—came to insist that the civilizing mission of imperial rule required the gradual devolution of responsibility to capable Indians who, in some cases, would be elected by small constituencies of property holders. In effect, the new local bodies granted Indians the power to tax themselves to raise money for reforms that their rulers wanted. But the exponents of

reform saw a higher mission in advocating devolution; the new institutions were to be schools of political education in which South Asians would acquire knowledge of appropriate political behavior and teach their countrymen the skills needed to manage their own affairs. J. B. Peile, proposing a new local self-government act before the Bombay Legislative Council in 1884, argued:

> Much has to be learnt before there can be a really popular movement to occupy the ground that is opened out by these measures. In reaching that consummation, we shall now transfer some of our responsibility to the men of "the party of progress and reform" and they must decentralize as well as the Government. We should not be satisfied if political education were to stop short at a small class marked out . . . from the masses. . . . We look to them to ensure their success by exerting themselves with a singleness of mind to set before their fellow citizens an example of disinterested and enlightened administration by private citizens. It may not seem a very lofty employment to teach the people . . . of country towns how to manage local conservancy, primary schools and dispensaries, but it is the underlying growth of social organization which is really important, and I think it is not unworthy of the best abilities and the highest ambition to build up in one's people with unpretentiousness and patient assiduity, the first foundations of a national spirit.[26]

The evolutionary underpinnings of this outlook could not have been clearer. India, with proper guidance, could be prompted slowly along the same path of development taken by Britain. While Indians now lacked a conception of the public good, they could slowly develop a civic consciousness if given proper nurturance by their rulers with the cooperation of indigenous leaderships. At the time Peile made this statement, nearly all members of the colonial ruling group would have agreed with him that this process had not yet gone beyond the germination stage. Thus, according to the metaphor of human growth, if the British public was seen to have entered adulthood, Indians were as yet preschoolers. But the very fact of announcing that new stages lay ahead held out to elite Indians an alternative to the idiom of natural leadership—the notion of public leadership. These two, seemingly antagonistic, modes of representing oneself in politics became competing possibilities among Indians attempting to create places for themselves in the colonial order.

In the late nineteenth century, even the foremost British advocates of devolution did not imagine that political education could take place without continued colonial guidance. Always the rulers of India would be present to pull back on the reins of reform if the process got out of hand. Most administrators insisted that the experiment of self-government always needed to be tempered by a concern for the wel-

fare of religious minorities. As the devolution of power proceeded, many worried about the fate of Muslims and other supposedly backward communities in a polity that would come to be dominated by high-status Hindus and tried to establish safeguards that would ensure the representation of these minorities. In local self-governing institutions where the principle of election was adopted, a system of nominations usually guaranteed the continued presence of religious minorities and other groups in need of protection.[27] But such policies were themselves heavily influenced by colonial understandings of the subcontinent which lumped together one extremely diverse set of people, the Hindus (hardly an indigenous category), and considered them a dominant community while labeling another, almost equally diverse, people, the Muslims, a minority and a backward community. The creation of each of these categories made possible the emergence of spokesmen who would claim to represent the entire body of their coreligionists.[28] Thus there was a major contradiction in the rhetoric of the Raj: on one hand, it encouraged Indians to develop universal loyalties and criticized them for parochialism and communalism; on the other, it undercut the development of loyalties to public and nation by building in incentives to identify with religion and caste. This contradiction was never fully resolved, even at the end of the Raj. For twentieth-century Indian nationalists, the policies seemed firm evidence that the British had followed a deliberate policy of divide and rule.

Neither liberal nor imperial assumptions were uniform or unchanging. In Britain factional and class groups continuously struggled to implement their own understandings of the key principles of the public sphere, inevitably producing new permutations and transformations in the terms of political debate. In India the ruling group—itself heterogeneous—regularly faced situations that called for reinterpretation in the language of politics. When Indians became extensively involved in the process of shaping the meanings of imported political principles, this process rapidly accelerated. Still, by the 1880s, the essential categories, symbols, and vocabulary of colonial discourse had become established. To paraphrase Ashis Nandy, colonialism had begun to spawn a culture in which the ruled were constantly tempted to pursue their own struggles for justice and power within discursive and psychological limits set by the rulers.[29]

CONCLUSION

It was within languages provided by the colonial rulers—the public idiom and the idiom of community—that much of Surat's politics came to be conducted. Only those who could control public and colonial dis-

course could hope to influence their rulers' perceptions and to find a place within the British Raj. These elites drew upon a limited number of keywords and phrases that carried particular potency for the ruling group—*natural leader, loyalty, public, nation, representation, political education, devolution of power, Muslim backwardness, improvement,* and *moral and material progress.* They devised forms of political participation that reflected this vocabulary. The appropriation of colonial discourse does not indicate that the British had successfully imposed a foreign culture on those they ruled. Surti elites did not accept the same meanings of these words, phrases, and models as the British. Rather, they transformed these meanings, in the process creating a new culture of politics—or to be more precise, several different new political subcultures. But in doing so, they became implicated in languages that essentially confirmed the inferiority of India and the domination, both cultural and political, of Britain.

SEVEN

The Notables and Public Culture

The public sphere in Surat owes its origins not to a newly emergent bourgeoisie or to those who had been educated in the English language, but to a category of persons we might call the notables of Surat, since that was a term occasionally used in referring to them. These men were quite diverse in their social backgrounds and their constituencies in the city, and in the basis of their local authority. What they held in common was that all served as intermediaries between the Anglo-Indian ruling group and the population of the city and that all were perceived by the British as men who possessed a special local influence, an influence of a primordial or natural character. Such colonial perceptions made it possible for the notables to achieve positions of considerable weight among the small circle of European officials actually resident in the city.

It was these men who first began to appropriate a British civic idiom and to forge a new style of politics centering on the concepts of the public and the public good. They became involved in municipal government, they engaged in public philanthropy, they participated in imperial ritual life, and they made recourse to pressure-group politics. But their accommodation to the social and political norms of their rulers by no means reflected an abandonment of preexisting preoccupations or a total embrace of Western principle. Indeed, the incipient public culture was consistent with the essentially conservative impulses of local magnates—the development of stable social relationships with political overlords, the protection of familial reputations, and the defense of their moral communities. The language of civic politics became a new vehicle for cultivating deferential ties with the ruling group, for advancing claims to political power, and, ultimately, for

safeguarding their groups from the potential intrusions of the colonial order. In essence the notables sacrificed control over the outer arena of politics to preserve control over the areas of local life they themselves deemed most critical.

THE NOTABLES

The set of families we can identify as the notability of Surat had emerged even before colonial rule formally began in 1800. In order to extend its trade and influence in Surat, the East India Company had established alliances with a diverse group—commercial magnates, religious headmen, and even members of the Mughal elite. As the company transformed itself from a commercial body into a territorial power, it continued to rely on many of these same men and their descendants. The colonial administration, of course, also hired hundreds of Indians as officials, clerks, village headmen, and police in Surat district, but these employees were rarely believed to have the status in urban society necessary to maintain local order and to gain the acquiescence of the larger population to British rule. Consequently, civil servants sought the support of commercial magnates, members of the Muslim gentry, and spiritual headmen whom they identified as the men of local influence.[1]

Nineteenth-century British administrators tended to think of Surti society as composed largely of four communities defined by religious belief: the Hindu-Jains (generally treated as a single community), the Parsis, the Muslims, and the Daudi Bohras. Within these groupings, they believed, were figures who held the unswerving support of their coreligionists as a result of traditional family status or the supposedly hereditary headmanship of important communal bodies. Civil servants regarded these people as having a natural quality of leadership that was local, personal, and usually inherited, men analogous in the British mind to the aristocracy of England.[2] The process of identifying men who met these criteria excluded other important leaderships in the city—for example, the *sheths* of occupational *mahajans* and the leaders of caste *panchayats*—from access to district officers. Petty traders, artisans, and other subordinate groups were in effect deprived of all direct means of reaching the highest civil servants; they had to go instead through the urban patriciate unofficially defined by the British. Such channels of approach were apparent even in moments of protest. In 1844 demonstrations against increases in the salt tax began when a large crowd of lower- and middle-caste background pelted the homes of several of the most prominent notables with stones to compel them to bring its grievances before the district magistrate.[3]

By midcentury, perhaps a dozen local families had successfully gained recognition as natural leaders in British eyes. In times of stress the district administration relied upon this small notability to help keep the peace. During the salt-tax riots, for instance, the district officer attempted to restore order by contacting Sayyid Ali Edrus, leader of the Muslims; the *da'i,* headman of the Bohras; the Maharaj of Mota Mandir and several *sheths*, including the Mahajan Sheth, as representatives of the Hindus; and an unidentified Parsi leader, probably a member of the Modi family.[4] During the Mutiny of 1857, when the British feared an uprising of local Muslims, they again called upon the head of the Edrus family to calm his coreligionists.[5] The apparent success of these methods in meeting local crises seemed to the government a confirmation of its approach. The notable families established a special relationship with the highest civil servants that most were able to sustain up to World War I.

Despite the hereditary element in the British conception of natural leadership, some movement into and out of the notability did occur out of necessity. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Bakza, the Nawab of Surat, and the Nawab of Bela families among the Muslims—families that had not played a critical intermediary role early in the century—and newly wealthy Hindu and Jain *sheth*s such as the pearl merchants Naginchand Jhaverchand and Hirachand Motichand entered the elite ranks. Yet British civil servants still considered the authority of these persons to have a certain traditional quality, either because of the long-standing status of the family or because of its extensive involvement in religious patronage.

Relations between these notables and their rulers were marked by relatively low levels of strain during the early decades of the nineteenth century. The officials of the new empire made minimal demands on Indian urban centers in this period, regarding cities more as arenas of commerce and as stable centers from which the government could stretch its tentacles into the countryside than as major sources of revenue in and of themselves. Motivated by a desire to foster free trade throughout its dominion, the government eliminated most of the duties on commerce imposed by the *nawab*s and steered away from new taxation that might foster social discontent (the increase in the salt tax being one major exception).[6] In 1808 a commissioner appointed to consider the advisability of a local house tax recommended that it not be instituted, arguing that it would be interpreted by Hindus as "a personal intrusion, from which their religious prejudices shrink" and that Muslims, who feared being "confounded with other castes," would regard the measure as an "alarm no less serious to their pride." His superior in Bombay agreed, stating that "under existing circumstances . . .

nothing should be hazarded to give the smallest umbrage to the nations."[7] Town dwellers thus escaped the relentless pressures that the company exerted on Indian peasants. As a result, the rulers rarely placed their collaborators in local society in situations where their authority would be seriously called into question.

Around midcentury, however, the colonial state began to be more insistent in its demands on the local citizenry. Pursuing the goal of progress, a goal essentially defined from outside the city, the civil administration established a host of policies that threatened important areas of local life and culture. But rather than forcing the notables into open defiance, these policies had the paradoxical effect of driving local magnates closer to their rulers. Public culture was one product of this interaction.

PROGRESS AND THE CIVIC ORDER

South Asian urban centers began to assume a more central place in the fiscal calculations of the Raj as a result of new financial pressures in the second half of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, inflation, shifts in the silver/gold ratio, and growing military costs placed new strains on the imperial budget.[8] On the other, a variety of imperial interest groups pressured the government of India to increase its expenditures. Manchester's calls for the development of irrigation, roads, and railways to stimulate trade carried increasing weight, not only with officials directly under the industrialists' sway but also among those concerned with improving the imperial balance of payments. Military strategists pushed for better internal communications and an end to the unsanitary conditions that threatened the health of the Indian army.[9] At the same time lobbyists both inside and outside the government were beginning to insist that the Indian peasantry was unable to bear any greater burden. Increasingly the civil administration turned to India's towns to take up the slack.

The official view of the role of cities thus underwent a slow transfiguration. Urban places were no longer just headquarters for revenue establishments or staging points in the export of agricultural produce; rather, they were to become a significant part of the taxation structure and critical centers for launching India's development. Officials began to consider the application of Victorian notions of civic improvement to Indian towns. They urged the adoption of land surveys and bylaws to control unsanitary practices and to regulate the use of urban space. They formulated plans to improve urban health, the flow of commerce, police services, and education. They thought of providing cities with roads and bridges, public parks and water foun-

tains, clock towers and drainage systems, libraries and schools. All these schemes cost money, and since the Raj was unwilling to strain its own budget further, it now sought funding from local sources. In most Indian cities, municipalities were established to develop civic services and to tax the citizenry.[10]

In Surat this emerging agenda made stable ruler-subject relations more difficult. The new civic ideals essentially issued from above; the city's inhabitants initially had little interest in the services that the civil administration believed they required. With time, some local demand for primary schools, the construction and repair of roads, and flood protection did develop, but even then, many residents resented paying for projects that benefited neighborhoods other than their own.[11] Sanitary reforms—the most expensive of municipal efforts—won little acceptance in the town. Few residents subscribed to the germ theory of disease causation, which, after all, had only begun to inform sanitary efforts in England itself. There was thus little felt need for cleaner sources of water, drainage works, and disinfection projects.[12]

At the same time, progress posed many potential dangers to existing patterns of trade and culture. In the effort to construct a cleaner, less disorderly city more acceptable to the Victorian mind, the state entered or threatened to enter wide areas of social life that had never before been its domain. The municipality began to enact bylaws regulating construction, unsanitary conditions, "offensive and dangerous trades," and the use of land, laws which in theory applied to all, regardless of social rank. A land survey fixing urban property rights defined large areas of the city as public space not to be used for private purposes. This distinction between public and private space was new for the Surtis, who had generally built their shops and homes on whatever free land was available. Resistance to the survey prolonged its completion for more than a decade.[13] Now too citizens had to be concerned with how they disposed of waste waters and garbage, since a violation of the bylaws could land them in municipal court, a potentially costly and embarrassing experience.

A few reforms undertaken by the local body touched city dwellers in their most culturally sensitive spots. Surat's commissioners—unlike those in some other Indian cities—wisely avoided embarking on projects that involved altering or destroying temples, mosques, and other sacred spots.[14] Nevertheless the municipality flirted dangerously with regulating Muslim burial places, placing restrictions on caste feasts and enacting regulations to prevent cattle and dogs' roaming the streets. During epidemics, the local body compelled residents to allow untouchable sweepers into their homes to carry out disinfection campaigns, upsetting high-caste Hindus.[15] All of these efforts met with op-

position, often expressed in everyday acts of noncompliance that effectively thwarted imperial purposes. Observing these signs of resistance, Theodore Hope, collector of Surat and president of the municipality during its most extensive period of reform, reported to his superiors in 1871: "Municipal government can never be a popular government in the sense that it is liked by the people because the very *raison d'être* of the Municipality is a perpetual war with those problems which are normal with the mass of the population, and are either followed or looked on with favour by too many of the upper classes."[16] No doubt he would have found many in the city who would have agreed that such a war indeed existed, though most residents would have blamed this conflict on the unprecedented intrusion of government into the inner sphere of Surti concerns.

The most broadly hated imperial measures, not surprisingly, were new taxes. Between the 1850s and World War I, the burden on the Surti ratepayer increased many times over. But it was not just the amount of taxation that fostered resentment; it was the shape this taxation took. Civil administrators sought to shift the burden of taxation away from town duties—the traditional source of urban revenues—to direct forms of taxation. Householders in the city tended to view direct taxes as potentially damaging to their *abru* since such cesses generally involved detailed assessments of their property or income that could become public and since the amount of taxation was fixed according to impersonal scales which did not take into account the status of the payer.[17] While direct taxation produced protest widely all over India, perhaps no city was so consistent in resisting it as Surat.[18] When the provincial government imposed an income tax in 1860, traders called a citywide business stoppage.[19] A license tax on local businesses in 1878 provoked several days of rioting.[20] On every occasion when the municipality considered raising direct taxes—the cesspool tax in the 1870s, the house tax in the early 1890s, the water rate in the late 1890s, and the sanitary cess in the early 1900s—it found itself facing determined, though often unorganized, resistance.[21] The house-tax movement, which involved nearly the whole tax-paying population and which lasted for four years, almost undermined an ambitious government scheme to provide Surat with a new waterworks.[22]

Thus the colonial preoccupation with improvement operated at cross purposes with core concerns of merchants and other local groups, endangering areas of indigenous life traditionally beyond the purview of the state. As under the Mughals, rule by outsiders again began to create insecurity for the city's residents. The source of this insecurity, however, was now less the behavior of members of a ruling nobility than the laws and regulations of the new administration.

In the past, local leaderships had attempted to resist threats posed by alien overlords as well as to enhance their own status within the inner political arenas of the city by seeking to forge personal bonds with members of the ruling group. But the demise of the contest state and the development of a bureaucratic ethos at the highest level of government rendered the formation of clientage ties through gift giving and engagement in a durbar-style politics increasingly difficult. Motivated by a sense of mission and by feelings of cultural superiority, members of the colonial elite fashioned a distinct Anglo-Indian society that seemingly left little room for complex personal relationships with their subjects. British officers radically disjoined their private lives, where they interacted mainly with English men and women, from their professional lives, where they had dealings with their Indian subordinates. In the former sphere there emerged a distinctly British set of rites—polo, tennis, ballroom dancing, and social drinking—fashioned on English upper-class models and centered on exclusively European social clubs. Regulations prohibiting officials' attending "complimentary entertainments of a formal and public character" blocked Indians from creating social occasions of their own that would include the governing elite. In their workplaces, civil servants were to dispense their justice with impartiality and without regard to friendships or ties of affection; it became inappropriate for any official to maintain his own personal hangers-on. High-ranking civil servants came to regard presents as bribes which could not be accepted, and the maturing empire no longer required or sought financing from wealthy merchants. While gifts offered secretly may have remained important to currying favor with lower-ranking officials, they could no longer serve as a public expression of an affective tie with a powerful person.

Yet despite these changes, local elites found that ties across the social boundary between the ruler and the ruled were still possible. A number of notable families successfully accommodated themselves to the new political environment by fashioning a style of interaction with their overlords rooted in the imperial ethic of improvement itself. They took on public roles—roles defined by an identification with the interests of the city and the empire as a whole—and involved themselves in municipal affairs, philanthropy, imperial ritual, and political pressure groups, all forms of civic expression that civil servants regarded as meritorious. As they adopted public discourse from their political overlords, the notables bestowed a legitimacy upon the enterprise of improvement and upon the empire itself, but they also established reciprocal moral associations with the overlords that renewed their political leverage. In essence, they continued a long-established pattern of cultivating deferential political relationships by using the language of their alien rulers.

The particular adaptation of Surat's natural leaders to public discourse clearly bore the stamp of its creation under colonial circumstance. The new civic culture was a curious configuration that reflected the many contradictory expectations placed upon the notability. According to these expectations, figures with little English education believed to be hereditary leaders of local groupings and guardians of traditional values were to become agents of progress and political education, representatives of the people, and the advocates of universal principles such as the public good. These same figures, whose local authority rested upon their reputations within precolonial social formations, were to put themselves at the vanguard of an effort to bring about civic improvement, an effort consistently opposed by most urban people. Finally, a public sphere that in nineteenth-century political thinking was to be an autonomous arena where criticisms of the state could be made, was to be created by the most important collaborators with British rule in local society. To reconcile these apparently contradictory goals, the notables produced a novel style of political action, one which formally accepted the legitimacy of the colonial rulers and of the modernizing impulse but at the same time served to blunt the impact of reform, at least for the city's most prosperous groups.[23] I examine four manifestations of this public culture: the municipality, philanthropy, ritual, and pressure-group politics.

THE MUNICIPALITY

The municipality was the most important area in which notables generated identities as public leaders. Surat's municipality was one of fourteen started up in Bombay Presidency in the years after the passage of the Government of India Act XXVI of 1850, which allowed local bodies to be established by the choice of a city's inhabitants. Allocated to these bodies were the functions of conservancy, road repairs, street lighting, and the framing of bylaws, and the power to levy indirect taxes on local commerce.[24] In reality, the Surtis as a whole were never consulted in the formation of the municipal council—only a few prominent householders with particularly close ties to the Collector of Surat District. Until the 1880s, the collector always occupied the municipal presidency; council meetings took place in his office or even at his residence until an old Muslim caravansery was converted into Surat's first municipal building in 1867.[25]

The responsibilities of Surat's first municipality, incorporated in 1852, were small, consisting largely of lighting and cleaning the streets. It met its expenses by levying a surcharge on alcohol production at the local distillery and a duty on sugar imported into the city. During the

next four decades, its functions expanded to include constructing roads and bridges, digging drainage channels alongside the city streets, cleaning thousands of household latrines, and developing flood-protection works, a public water supply, and a number of smaller conservancy projects. Over the same period it came to employ more than one hundred workers. By 1910 the municipality's annual expenditures amounted to a little more than four *lakh* rupees, still no more than the annual business of some of the city's wealthiest *sheths*.

For the first thirty years, the collector nominated all the councillors. The first council consisted of twelve influential men, who, with one exception, were either government employees or acknowledged leaders of the city's four recognized religious communities. Besides the collector, members included two prominent Hindu *sheths*, the heads of the Bakshi and Edrus families from among the Muslims, the head of the Modi family and Khan Bahadur Ardasir Dhanjishah (a high-ranking government officer) from among the Parsis, and an influential Bohra *sheth*. Its most reknowned member was Durgaram Manchharam Dave, an educational officer in the state of Rajkot and founder of the Manav Dharma Sabha, one of Gujarat's first religious reform associations. The number of councillors later expanded to thirty during the 1860s and 1870s, most of whom were government servants or leading figures from the four communities.

In 1883, spurred by local self-government reforms of the Liberal viceroy, Lord Ripon, the provincial administration introduced the principle of election in Surat. A small electorate, limited by property ownership, tax payment, and educational qualifications, gained the right to choose fifteen of the thirty councillors. The following chapter will discuss how English-educated politicians from outside the ranks of the natural leaders were able to take advantage of the electoral system and enter the municipality. But government nominations of the remaining fifteen seats continued to ensure places for high-ranking administrators and urban notables. Since most of the elected councillors were Hindu, the administration restricted its nominations largely to the Parsi, Muslim, and Bohra communities. Members of several old elite families, including the Modi, Edrus, Bakshi, Nawab of Surat, Nawab of Bela, and Ahmedbhai Rahemtulla (a Bohra *sheth*), regularly won appointments, effectively perpetuating their political influence from generation to generation. When the head of one of these families died, it was common for the district collectorate simply to appoint his heir to his place on the council.

The civil servants of the Raj reminded their nominees regularly that the performance of municipal duties and espousal of urban reform were virtues of the highest order. Speaking before the council in 1871,

Theodore Hope promised, "The harder you work, . . . the more power Government will give to you . . . . You will be united in feeling and interest with your present rulers, equal in rights and privileges to all other citizens of the British Empire, and invested with that full share in administration which is the birthright of all under the British Constitution, and which the Government now only waits for yourselves in order to concede."[26] Frederick Lely, district collector and president of the municipality when it approved the city's waterworks scheme, sermonized less magnanimously in an address before the council in 1894, "You have to prove that you can, like men of the West, lay down a thoughtful policy and follow it with resolution. . . . The habit of sacrificing present advantages for the attainment of a distant object or for the benefit of generations yet unborn is the essence of national greatness."[27] Lely clearly expected the councillors to leave behind private interests and parochial allegiances to pursue the larger good of the city. "What we desire in a municipal commissioner," he lectured on another occasion, "is that (1) he form his opinions with care, with impartiality and knowledge; (2) that having formed his opinion, he declare it boldly without fear of displeasure from caste fellows, relations or neighbours."[28]

The notables who won nomination to the municipality regularly demonstrated a commitment to colonial reforms through their presence on the local body and through their public support for government-sponsored programs. Nominees invariably stood by the civil administration in council votes, backing the collector even when the measures were manifestly unpopular. Even the most controversial measure to come before the municipal commissioners, the house-tax scheme of the early 1890s, won the support of all the government's nominees. The overt and unwavering backing for government led some local critics to accuse nominees such as Mir Gulam Baba Khan, the Nawab of Surat and briefly president of the municipality, of behaving sycophantically and of introducing a "party spirit" into the local body.[29] British officers, on the other hand, regarded those same men as having the highest civic character. In 1888 the district collector commended Mir Gulam Baba Khan for having "always taken up his position in front of any movement regarding the improvement of the town," arguing that the *nawab*'s status as the city's most prominent citizen had made possible a series of "progressive" measures.[30]

The natural leaders of Surat were also called upon to handle sensitive negotiations between the municipality and members of their religious communities. When the government decided in 1869 to restrict the sale of meat to three markets regulated by the council, it asked Sayyid Hussain Edrus and Mirza Sultan Ali Beg to win over the city's

Muslim butchers.[31] In 1904 the collector sought the support of Naginchand Jhaverchand, a prominent Jain pearl merchant, in his effort to persuade the Golas to accept an ambitious municipal scheme to rebuild their neighborhood in accordance with Western planning ideals.[32] A whole committee of notables was established in 1898, when, because of an outbreak of plague, the municipality needed to disinfect thousands of homes.[33] On each occasion, British civil servants genuinely feared that serious resistance to the municipality's efforts might have developed if not for these local intermediaries.

By taking on municipal responsibilities, Surat's notables reinforced their identities as important persons who were in fundamental agreement with the purposes of empire. Civic action bolstered the special ties of Surti leaderships with British civil servants. Toward the end of his tenure as municipal president, Theodore Hope described his relations with council members in almost emotional terms: "There is not one of you with whom I am not on terms of intimacy and friendship."[34] Such affective links, established through years of public service on the council, often led to expanded political clout and, in the long term, to titles and places of prominence in the collector's annual durbar. The members on the Plague Vigilance Committtee of 1898, for instance, were all rewarded with certificates of merit presented at the durbar of 1900. The most prominent figures on the committee, Bakshi Mir Sadruddin Khan, Moulvi Abdul Kadar Bakza, Barjorji Nasserwanji Vakil, and Hirachand Motichand Jhaveri, later were awarded titles for their public service.[35]

The natural leaders performed important services in the course of their municipal work, but much of their participation in council affairs was as much an act of public submission to the rulers of India as it was a wholesale embrace of the civic ideals professed by Hope and Lely. Some councillors simply did not know English, the language in which most municipal meetings were conducted, and had little understanding of the mystifying details of municipal regulation. Attendance was generally sporadic, and many sessions of the council or its various subcommittees had to be adjourned for lack of a quorum. Councillors often seemed less concerned with pursuing the details of schemes of improvement in the council than with establishing a reputation for commitment to reform sufficient to win government approbation, as one local journalist acknowledged when he wrote: "That public spirit which is proof against all seductions of glory and renown, official favour and titles, is wanting in this official-ridden country."[36]

Most commissioners departed from the pure civic model by employing their formal authority to advance and protect personal and group concerns. That members of Indian municipalities controlled the distri-

bution of jobs, the sale of public lands, the location of public facilities, and permission to construct new buildings has been acknowledged in a number of recent works.[37] Less well recognized is that councillors often used their positions to weaken the impact of colonial reforms on themselves and their social groups. Though powerless to influence the general direction of policy, they could obstruct the passage of particular measures by raising legal technicalities, repeatedly referring matters to committees, or failing to attend meetings. Commissioners with appointments as honorary magistrates on municipal courts could influence the enforcement of bylaws. The rare councillor who worked to enforce the letter of the law quickly found himself estranged from local society.[38] The majority who did not often enhanced their reputations as community patrons. Open support for the government in municipal votes thus never precluded acting on behalf of one's kinspeople and community in the application of municipal policy. In short, few notables made the distinction between public and private activity as sharply as their rulers would have wished.

Councillors could also affect the ultimate shape of policies proposed by British officers. Both nominated and elected members, for instance, often softened the burden of urban taxation by voting for revenue-raising measures less likely to affect themselves and their constituencies. Though the government constantly attempted to substitute direct for indirect taxes, Indian members of the council effectively blocked these efforts for many years by raising objections in committee and municipal sessions. They also ensured that those direct taxation schemes that were adopted worked to the benefit of their own social strata. The amount of the sanitary tax, a cess raised to pay for the costs of cleaning latrines, was the same for households with no latrines as it was for those with three or four latrines.[39] The house-tax schedule was also very regressive. According to one critic, "Those who inhabit better houses pay a smaller percentage [relative to the value of their homes] than those who occupy scarcely habitable huts with walls of bamboo plastered with cow dung and mud. A grandee like the Nawab or Bakshi pays much less than a poor widow living in a home in no way decent."[40] The council even passed a resolution that exemptions could be granted on grounds of poverty, a move that theoretically benefited those least able to pay but that in practice was used by wealthy citizens best able to present a case before the appropriate committees.[41]

Thus municipal policy, which on paper was to be administered with an even hand, was often applied with a flexibility that took into account different local statuses and concerns. There is no reason to suspect a deliberate duplicity on the part of nominated members of the council; British civil servants, as we have seen, were convinced of the sincerity

of some notables' commitment to progress. It might be more correct to suggest that nominees possessed contradictory consciousnesses. They conceded their commitment to the broader agenda of reform in exchange for a degree of control over the workings of the municipality, using their position to deflect potentially threatening improvements. Civil administrators of the Raj were well aware that the behavior of the notables did not match their own ideals, but in their eagerness to gain allies in their overall urban program, they usually accepted this negotiated form of involvement in municipal activity.

Less tangibly, associations with government officials on the local body allowed some notables to perpetuate statuses outside the municipality altogether. Through their participation in councils, Parsi notables, Hindu-Jain and Bohra *sheths*, and Mughal gentry sustained government recognition as representatives of their religious communities, recognition that helped them to maintain their influence within their own collectivities. For example, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the head of the Modi family, a regular member of the council, attempted repeatedly to gain official acknowledgment of his claim to be the *davar*, or headman, of the Parsi community, a claim other Parsis disputed. The government of India ultimately recognized the *davar*-ship as a title hereditarily enjoyed by the family, making possible the family's continued preeminence in a wide range of Parsi affairs.[42] The participation of Bohra *sheths* in the council may have helped gain colonial recognition of the community's distinctness from the Muslims and of the special position of the *da'i* as leader of the group, both of which came to be challenged regularly in the courts during the second half of the century. It is, of course, difficult to document precisely how the involvement of these men in the municipality affected British decision makers, but it would be senseless to perpetuate the colonial myth that civil servants of the Raj rendered their judgments in the courts and government offices impartially.

For the old Mughal gentry, council activities provided an opportunity to rebuild social statuses they had once enjoyed as the former rulers of the city—but now as leaders of the Muslim community. The heads of several immigrant Muslim families, including the Edrus, Bakshi, Nawab of Surat, and Nawab of Bela families, regularly assisted the local body in its dealing with their coreligionists. After the elective system was introduced, the Sunni notability became particularly vocal in staking claims to community leadership. Repeatedly pointing to the failure of non-Bohra Muslims to win elections, they pleaded for more Muslim nominations.[43] Local authorities, eager to accommodate appeals for communal balance and to gain loyal councillors who would support their civic program, regularly nominated members of the gen-

try to the local body. As councillors, they acted to protect a distinctly Muslim sphere of concerns, such as Muslim graveyards and Muslim schools, from municipal regulation, in some cases weakening the local body's ability to enforce its bylaws uniformly or to develop overarching educational institutions.

For Surti notables, therefore, the pattern of accommodation to municipal affairs reflected an attempt to reconcile the sometimes contradictory demands of public and natural leader. In subscribing to a new civic ethos and thereby developing special ties with British civil servants, they were often able to advance concerns rooted in the inner arenas of politics. Though different magnates tended to develop different ways of resolving this tension, each cultural outcome reflected a compromise between two largely distinct moral idioms, one indigenous, the other of alien origins.

PHILANTHROPY

The bilingualism of urban notables was even more apparent in their diverse "portfolios" of gift giving. During the late nineteenth century philanthropy began to emerge as a particularly important means of establishing an identity as a person worthy of imperial recognition. For urban *sheths* philanthropy became a way to translate portions of their capital—the resource they possessed in greatest abundance—into authoritative relations with the British rulers at a time when tribute had become stigmatized as bribery. Influential local men began donating to public causes—education; health care; the building of public facilities like clock towers, water fountains, and public gardens; and relief efforts in times of plague, famine, or flood—in quite significant quantities after the 1860s. Public munificence often gained magnates access to the colonial rulers that might have otherwise been blocked. But they rarely abandoned older forms of gift giving, particularly religious patronage, which had long been important to their local status.

During late nineteenth-century colonial rule, few acts were more likely to win the approbation of British civil servants than philanthropy. Victorian values placed a high premium on private efforts to improve human welfare. "For most Englishmen," David Owen has written, "the hundreds of charitable institutions [in Britain] represented one of the glories of the British tradition and stood as a monument to the superiority of voluntary actions over state intervention."[44] British officers in India's districts, hoping to promote an ethos which they believed had contributed to the advancement of their own civilization, sometimes came to regard the stimulation of private benevolence by wealthy merchants and landlords as a part of their official duties. In Surat around

midcentury, civil servants began to urge wealthy citizens to donate to a great variety of public projects. A few approached the problem with proselytizing zeal, hoping to divert some of the money spent on religious festivals, offerings to deities, and marriage ceremonies into channels they regarded as more productive. In 1910 the district collector, attempting to persuade residents to donate to a school fund in memory of Edward VII, reasoned: "Far better it is to lay out your riches on such lasting objects than to waste them on fireworks, in music and other extravagances, and yet I am assured that the annual expenditures in the city on fireworks alone is probably as great as will be required for the memorial we propose."[45] Obviously, the collector, like most of his countrymen, failed to recognize or accept the importance of "extravagances" in establishing merchants' local reputations.

During the last four decades of the nineteenth century, a small number of prominent *sheths* and other magnates, perhaps about two dozen in all, began to respond to such pleas and to contribute large sums to philanthropic causes, often establishing positions of considerable influence. Unlike tribute, philanthropic activity could never become a direct exchange with ruling authorities that might be rewarded immediately with some personal boon. Yet those who became extensively involved in the new forms of gift giving achieved recognition in colonial circles as persons with a special concern for the public good, and this recognition could yield greater political leverage and greater status. Officials acknowledged magnates with records of secular munificence as advanced members of their communities with a special role to play in the political education of the city's residents. Prominent philanthropists were consulted on important affairs of the city, such as maintaining law and order and enforcing municipal regulations. A few were nominated as municipal councillors and as honorary magistrates. Finally, philanthropy became an important path to honors from the administration and to a certain degree of solidarity with British officials. The government acknowledged donors by erecting plaques of honor on public buildings, reserving special places for philanthropists at the local durbar, inviting them to occasional "at-home" parties held at the collector's residence, and most significantly, granting titles to those with the most substantial records of civic munificence. At times officials openly used the lure of honors to persuade the rich to contribute to hospitals, schools, libraries, and veterinary dispensaries.

The importance of philanthropy as an investment in future good relations with the colonial elite and government honors is well illustrated by the case of Naginchand Jhaverchand Jhaveri. A wealthy pearl dealer, Naginchand moved to Surat from Bombay during the plague of 1897. He helped finance government-sponsored relief efforts when the plague spread to Surat and later when famine struck in 1899–1900.

Then, in 1903, on the occasion of his son's wedding, he offered the government 25,000 rupees for a public library and meeting hall. He later donated 10,000 more rupees for the project, half of it for the purchase of books in the name of Sir George Clark, the governor of Bombay.[46] This later act may suggest that he viewed his philanthropic activities as a form of personal tribute to his political overlords.

By the first years of the twentieth century, British civil servants stationed in Surat began to recognize Naginchand as a leading member of the Hindu and Jain community and consulted him regularly on urban affairs. Though he was never a member of the municipality, district officers sought his advice on a wide range of urban problems over the next decade. In 1906, in perhaps the crowning event of his career, the government awarded him the title of *Rao Bahadur,* largely as a reward for his public charity. The collector held an evening party in his home and later a special durbar to honor Naginchand.[47] Bestowal of the title set off a chain reaction of celebrations among pearl merchants and other Jains. In Bombay the leaders of the Jhaveri Mahajan (jewelers' guild), the Jain club, and several other associations held a dinner at which addresses were read praising Naginchand for his award and suggesting that he had won prestige for both himself and the whole community.[48] Seven years later, referring to the title conferred by the government, the district collector called for contributions to public charities by asking rhetorically whether "in any of his great transactions and investments in pearls or anything else, our wealthy citizen Rao Bahadur Naginchand Jhaverchand has ever got a better return on his capital or a safer investment than that which he secured when he built and gave us this hall and library."[49] Interestingly, the collector mentioned the potential improvement in one's *abru*—he used the Gujarati term in an English speech—as one of the major rewards that would accrue to philanthropists.

British officers were not usually quite so explicit in acknowledging the concrete returns to munificence, yet philanthropic activity did often go hand in hand with political sway and imperial honors. Hirachand Motichand Jhaveri, also a Jain pearl merchant, became a major organizer of and contributor to a cheap grain fund sponsored by the government during the famine of 1899 as well as a patron and trustee of many other public causes. He enjoyed considerable influence with a series of district collectors, which he used to attain such benefits for his community as exemptions of Jain pilgrims from travel restrictions during periods of plague, water connections for the *panjrapol,* and immunity for the same institution from certain forms of municipal taxation. He won appointment as an honorary magistrate on the municipal court and, in 1901, was awarded a *Rao Saheb*ship in recognition of his philanthropic record.[50] Ishwardas Jagjivandas Store, a cotton merchant who

served with Hirachand on the grain fund and was a patron of a number of schools and colleges, became an honorary magistrate and a very influential municipal councillor and later won the title of *Sardar.*[51]

By 1914 there had emerged in Surat a handful of magnates like Naginchand, Hirachand, and Store, who, as a result of their charitable activity, had achieved considerable recognition for a highly developed sense of civic responsibility. Yet any cultural change that occurred was a partial one, reflecting an accommodation to the value system of the ruling group tempered by pre-existing values. Despite the commitment they had shown to the public good and progress through their munificence, the great philanthropists often remained deeply conservative in other ways, carefully maintaining their *abru* among fellow traders and coreligionists. They dressed simply, practiced vegetarianism, observed pollution rules, and performed regular *seva* to their deities. They had in no sense become marginal men who had cut themselves off from their own social groups to participate wholly in an alien culture.

Most contributors to secular charities espoused by the British continued older forms of religious gift giving, usually on a far larger scale. Naginchand Jhaverchand devoted much larger sums to restoring temples, holding caste feasts, supporting Jain religious festivals and *panjrapols*, and purchasing Jain literature than to the causes that won him his title. In Surat he constructed a major Jain temple, hiring artisans from Agra and Jaipur.[52] Hirachand Motichand also rendered service to a number of Jain temples and the city *panjrapol* as a donor and trustee.[53] Ishwardas Jagjivandas gained considerable recognition as a devout Vaishnava by acting as trustee and patron of Hindu shrines.[54] Ironically, those who were most prominent in spending money for purposes civil administrators regarded as wasteful were often in the forefront of the charitable causes the British most fervently espoused.[55] The greater the *sheth,* the greater the diversity in his portfolio of charitable activity.

In some cases, wealthy men chose charities that were valued highly by both the colonial elite and members of their own social groups. Naginchand Jhaverchand, for instance, made sure that the library he had built would be used as a center for the dissemination of religious literature.[56] The heavy emphasis on educational patronage among Hindu and Jain *sheths* was partially the result of the growing demand for schooling among upper-caste residents eager to gain employment in the civil administration, the post office, or the railways. Education became accepted as a core community interest. As one speaker at a meeting to honor patrons of education put it, "It is our *dharma* to promote education."[57] Perhaps the three most generous Hindu or Jain contribu-

tors to Surti public causes before 1920, Premchand Raichand, Tapidas Varajdas, and Maganlal Thakordas Modi (all natives of Surat who had migrated to Bombay for business reasons but who maintained extensive social ties and commercial links with the smaller city), each made donations of hundreds of thousands of rupees to local schools or colleges. Certainly the approbation that these individuals later received was well deserved, but it makes little sense to regard them as persons whose views were far "in advance" of the rest of their locality. Their generosity won them much recognition within an already receptive community.

Officials found it easiest to stimulate local munificence when mercantile traditions coincided with government objectives. In times of fire, famine, or flood, wealthy residents rushed forward to contribute to relief efforts organized by colonial officers, expressing their concern for human and animal life and winning official recognition for their benevolence. During the famine of 1899–1900, Ishwardas Jagjivandas Store and Hirachand Motichand Jhaveri responded to the district collector by helping to establish a cheap grain fund to feed the thousands of refugees from the countryside. Merchants living in Surat and Bombay, genuinely concerned about the tremendous suffering caused by the famine but also worried about the potential for urban unrest if prices continued to escalate, donated thousands of rupees to this fund.[58] Store, Hirachand, and several other contributors later received titles and letters of commendation for their efforts. The same men, however, could prove rather apathetic about giving to other causes espoused by the British, such as sanitary works, hospitals, and public gardens.

A similar pattern of selectivity was present among the Muslim notability. During the 1860s and 1870s the Sunni gentry had contributed heavily to public charities. Soon, however, they began to devote more and more of their surplus capital to causes that were ostensibly Muslim. But even here there was a bifurcation between gift giving that could win the patronage of colonial rulers and that directed toward maintaining status among immigrant Muslims. Funding Muslim education seems to have fallen more in the first category. As members of the Nawab of Surat, Nawab of Bela, Edrus, and a few other prominent Muslim families sought to establish themselves as advocates for their coreligionists, a supposedly backward community, they gave increasingly to Muslim educational funds, largely through the local chapters of the Anjuman-e-Islam and the Mohamedan Union.[59] In general, these efforts made more of an impression on the British than on the towns' other Muslims, who were mostly traders, artisans, and laborers with little interest in the cause of secular education. But the same families also provided monies in far larger quantities to mosques, shrines, and Muslim religious festivals, which bolstered their status

among their coreligionists. To a few local journalists critical of the Mughal gentry, this diversity in gift giving was evidence of hypocrisy. One article in the *Gujarat Mitra* accused the Muslim aristocratic grandees of having "spent thousands in encouraging their people in all their superstitious and fanatical practices" and using "more money in degrading their people than in elevating them."[60] Obviously such comments were colored by a secular chauvinism that must be treated with some skepticism. Nevertheless, they reflect two important facts: first, Muslim notables made symbolic investments in two different audiences, and second, the indigenous audience was often more important than the colonial. The journalist—himself either a Hindu or a Parsi—apparently failed to notice that such bilingualism in giving was a characteristic of all important notables in Surat, not just the Muslim gentry.

Parsi magnates engaged in nearly the full range of public causes advocated by the rulers of India, perhaps because their community's traditions of social spending jibed more closely with British conceptions.[61] Municipal records contain much evidence of Parsi donations, great and small, to public projects, including drinking fountains, educational institutions, hospitals, dispensaries, and even an ill-fated waterworks scheme.[62] The most munificent of local Parsis, Barjorji Maherwanji Frasier, contributed large sums to develop the Victoria Gardens near the city square and a public promenade by the riverside during the 1860s and 1870s. He is best remembered for financing the city's clock tower on the main road from the city square to the railroad station.[63] Even in this gift, Frasier exhibited a concern with perpetuating his family's name. In a letter to the collector, he required that the municipality acknowledge his act with a letter of commendation, to name the tower after his father, to place a plaque to this effect on the structure, to promise to keep the tower in good condition, and if city improvements later made its removal necessary, to reconstruct the tower on another site with its plaque intact.[64]

The emergence of philanthropy does suggest a significant reformulation in the values and identity of some wealthy citizens of Surat. Through participation in new forms of benevolence, a few notables were able to win recognition as leaders of their communities, men devoted to the development of their city and loyal subjects of empire. But adjustments to Western philanthropic notions were always tempered by notions of personal dignity embedded in the local collectivities where the notables assumed leading positions.

CIVIC-IMPERIAL RITUAL

A feature of the developing public culture that has received especially little attention from historians is the place of civic and imperial ritual. Rituals were not, as many postcolonial scholars have tended to assume,

just empty sideshows to the "real" politics of the municipality and local pressure groups. Rather they were a central feature in the notability's political life. Here local elites gave dramatic confirmation of their identities as public leaders as well as of their subordination to the colonial rulers. Between 1885 and 1914, a period for which much evidence is available, the "native gentlemen" took part in a variety of occasions recognized by the British rulers as symbolically significant: visits by governors and viceroys, durbars, the opening of public buildings, parties in the house of the district collector, imperial victory celebrations, coronations, birthdays of the empress or emperor, and memorial services on the deaths of leading imperial personalities. These events received pages and pages of coverage in local newspapers—far more than any other kind of news story. Local citizens and the municipality devoted large sums of money to these ceremonies. To ignore such occasions is to impose the antiritualistic sentiments of contemporary intellectuals on the past as well as to miss the significance of deference as a mode of political expression.

The nature of the ritual interaction between local elites and their rulers in the mature phase of British colonialism differed markedly from that under precolonial polities. Under Mughal rule ritual time and work time, ritual space and work space, were largely conflated. A merchant entering the local durbar in order to present a petition found himself in the midst of an ongoing ceremony designed to focus attention on the members of the nobility present. According to one English traveler, "The governor comes to his seat attended every morning with 300 foot with firearms, three elephants in their clothing, . . . forty horses mounted, four and twenty banners of state; besides a large retinue of the Cazy's [judge] who is always present to assist him in law points. Moreover, he has loud trumpets . . . with thundering kettledrums."[65] The merchant, in presenting his appeal, became part of this ceremony. He waited his turn among the petitioners, and he offered his gift in an appropriately submissive manner before making his request. The nobleman rendered his decision with a demeanor befitting his status and his sense of self-importance, often in the form of a favor or boon. The ritual transaction thus was conducted largely in a personal idiom; through it, a relationship between patron and client was established.

Late nineteenth-century British administrators, aware that durbars and other forms of political ceremony had played a great role in precolonial South Asia, tended to assume the intrinsic susceptibility of their subjects to pomp and pageantry, not recognizing that the ritual involvement of Indians had itself been an adaptation to Mughal domination. The British hoped to draw upon Mughal ritual forms in strengthening the legitimacy of their empire and in inculcating certain

civic values. In localities such as Surat, district officers arranged many ceremonial observances, all designed to cement the ties of the population to the Raj.

Changes in the administrative and social ethos of the ruling group, however, made any exact reproduction of Mughal ceremony impossible. Civil administrators were anxious to prevent focusing ritual attention on individual imperial officials. Many no doubt believed that Indians regarded the British officer as a paternalistic figure, the *ma-bap* (mother and father) of the people living in his district. But such a view was considered a peculiar characteristic of the "natives" and was not to be encouraged in official policy. In theory, the civil servant was to act as an impersonal agent of a distant government whose authority derived less from his personal qualities and his ability to dispense favors than from the office he occupied and the principles of British rule which he supposedly applied with an even hand. This conception rendered inappropriate ostentatious display like the blowing of trumpets or beating of drums at the district offices during working hours, activity which would be wasteful of time and which would draw attention to the official rather than to his office. Ritual time was self-consciously disjoined from work time, ritual space from work space. Ceremonial observances were generally held in public places away from the collector's offices, yet not on the property of any individual. By the early twentieth century, the railroad station, the municipality, Naginchand Jhaverchand hall, and the Victoria Gardens became the chief venues of imperial rites. The government of India set out extensive regulations preventing officials from accepting gifts or any ritual submissions which might confer upon them a personal authority. The new ritual forms also excluded the presentations of most kinds of petitions and memorials. In accordance with the more bureaucratic conception of ritual, expressions of the private concerns of particular persons were inappropriate to public ceremony.

The civil servants hoped now to depoliticize and depersonalize ritual and direct it toward the cultivation of broader commitments that would bolster British authority. Often the chief focus of the ceremonial observance would be some imperial officer—the collector, a visiting governor or viceroy, or the empress or emperor. Yet in colonial theories operating at the district level, these men were not so much the personal objects of the ritual as figures who embodied the broader sentiments considered by the British to be of the noblest quality. Most critical of these was "loyalty"—an identification with the British Empire as a whole. The ruling group conceived of loyalty as a special feature which distinguished British rule from that of its predecessors in India—and, indeed, from all imperial ventures in human history. In an address to

the municipal councillors after the death of Edward VII in 1910, the collector grew eloquent on the subject:

> Even the most solidly designed structure must crash and totter if not held together by the most indispensable cement of Empire; I mean the unwavering loyalty of all good and enlightened subjects. For most of you here in India separated by race and by many thousands of miles, it can not be so much a sense of personal loyalty, of personal knowledge of the King Emperor, as to us who come from the heart of the Empire to assist in the administration of its provinces. For you loyalty means a sense of pride and of common interest in the harmonious and progressive growth of a great worldwide union of nations and states. Disloyalty means the disruption and separation of these into jarring and warring units of nations and communities occupied in internecine strife. . . . How often in the past have empires not so knit together by that sense been thrown into chaos and disaster by sudden removal of the Head? We have reason to realize the political value of loyalty; and to meet here to express it. . . .
>
> The king is dead. Long live the king.[66]

Most rituals also called for identification with the city and with the welfare of its inhabitants. Few observances, no matter how grand the occasion, went by without some attempt—an address by the municipality, a speech by the collector, the opening of a school—to stimulate civic pride and concern with urban improvement on the part of those in attendance.

By participating in civic-imperial ceremony, Surat's notables acknowledged the two critical principles of loyalty and public spiritedness while paying homage to some important imperial personage. Late colonial rituals became a new vehicle for rendering deference to the imperial overlords and for demonstrating that the notables shared a common ethical ground with their rulers. In rituals public leaders marked themselves off as 'advanced members' of their society, who had a genuine concern with the moral and material development of Surat. Implicitly their involvement confirmed that their aspirations to material and symbolic resources were indeed legitimate within the ethical framework of the Raj. Thus if attempts at the mystification of power were implicit in imperial rites, they were taking place at two levels. Not only was the British ruling group seeking to capture important symbols of power for itself and to socialize Indians into adopting imperial norms, but members of the local elite were communicating to the British that they adhered to these norms and were therefore entitled to all the privileges and influences associated with public leadership. But in both senses imperial ceremony was an important vehicle of colonial hegemony. Here I examine three different aspects of ceremonial life in Surat before World War I.

Imperial Visits

Perhaps the most exciting imperial celebrations in Surat were the visits of governors and viceroys. Such visits occurred fairly often after 1885, roughly every year or two. Usually an imperial visit was part of a larger tour planned by the high-ranking official as an effort to get in touch with his subjects. The provincial government typically informed the city several weeks in advance of the official's arrival. Representatives of local public institutions such as schools, orphanages, and local health societies would quickly begin to prepare, hoping to win the honor of a stop in the dignitary's tour around the city. Since such occasions were often the only opportunity for Surti leaderships to bypass the district establishment and to appeal directly to the highest officials in the land, the opportunity of playing host for such a stop was often enthusiastically sought. By the time the dignitary arrived in Surat, every hour of his program had been planned.

The visit always began with a ceremony of welcome at the railway station. Thousands of Surtis surrounded the station, curious to see the illustrious visitor. However, only about three dozen—princes from surrounding native states, government officials, representatives of the four religious communities, and members of the municipality—were on the platform at the time of arrival. Each was expected to wear elaborate dress supposedly typifying his community. When the dignitary disembarked, the district collector introduced these notables one by one, each in turn shaking the visitor's hand. Often there would be a garland ceremony as well. In most cases, a group of city policemen fired a salute, and local bands played imperial anthems. The governor or viceroy was then escorted around the city in procession to important sites, hearing addresses, opening public buildings, and perhaps visiting the original English factory, considered to be the site of the first English presence in India.[67]

Though there was considerable variation in the program from visit to visit, one regular feature was an address by the municipality. The local body had usually spent several thousand rupees making ready for this ceremony. Councillors regarded the address as a critical form of political action in material as well as symbolic terms since it provided an occasion to plead directly for expanded provincial grants to fund the construction of local public works. A special platform was built for the ceremony, on which leading Surtis, arranged by rank in the local list of *darbaris*, would sit alongside government officials. Members of the council had places just below the platform in front of an audience of perhaps several hundred householders, symbolizing their hierarchical position as leaders of the city but inferiors to the imperial personage. The address was not simply a speech but also a gift offered in a highly

formal fashion in return for the honor of the dignitary's presence. The vice president, generally the council's leading Indian member in the years before 1911, read the address while all the councillors stood at attention. Then he placed the address, printed on a piece of silk cloth, in a sandalwood box carved by local artisans and presented it to the visitor.[68]

In the address the councillors stressed their identification with the city as a historic entity, their concern with civic reform, and their loyalty to the empire. The text of the address, invariably printed in local newspapers, followed a fairly stylized format. First, it would welcome the visitor, sometimes "in the name of the citizens of every caste and creed" of Surat. In the next paragraphs, the address discussed the history of the city. Common themes here were Surat's past as a trading center, its claim to be the "cradle of the British Empire in India" (because of the first English factory), and its fall (due to the rise of Bombay and the silting of the Tapi River). The address then enumerated the municipality's efforts to improve sanitation, education, and roads before appealing for more funds to help the local body meet the costs of future projects. The document ended with an expression of the councillors' loyalty to the empire and prayers for the long life of the empress or emperor. The last sentence of an address to Lord Curzon in 1900 is typical: "We desire to convey to your Excellence the assurance of our deep loyalty and sincere devotion to our August Sovereign Her Most Gracious Majesty the Empress of India and we also take this opportunity to convey through your Excellency to Her Majesty our congratulations on the success of the British Arms in South Africa and we heartily wish this success may lead to a speedy and lasting peace."[69]

The dignitary, who received a copy of the speech in advance, responded point by point immediately after the vice president had finished his presentation. In most cases he would express his pleasure at visiting Surat (reiterating his special interest in seeing the "birthplace" of the British Empire), encourage the municipality to continue its efforts to improve the city, promise consideration of appropriately framed proposals for municipal projects or urge the council to develop new revenues to pay for projected plans, and thank the councillors for their welcome and their manifestations of loyalty. By receiving and responding to addresses, the dignitary singled out members of the local body as special leaders of their city and honored them for their continuing interest in the welfare of Surat's inhabitants, all in a context surrounded with the special mystique of empire.

Addresses thus served to reinforce two sets of unequal relationships simultaneously. First, by submitting themselves to an important representative of empire, the city's leaders confirmed their own subordina-

tion to the Anglo-Indian officials who ruled over them. At the same time they asserted their own claims to civic leadership, claims based upon both their loyalty and their concern with the welfare of the city's inhabitants and the cause of urban reform.

Durbars

Like addresses, durbars were a privileged opportunity for those recognized by district administrators as local leaders to separate themselves from the larger population and to share in the aura of the Raj. Local durbars took place on particularly important imperial occasions such as the coronation of 1903 and King George's visit to the Delhi Durbar in 1911, but also when the civil administration held celebrations in honor of citizens who had been granted titles by the government. Around 1905 the district administration began to hold an annual durbar in Surat at Divali time. On each of these occasions the collector's office carefully planned the program of events. Particularly crucial was the drawing up of the list of *darbaris*, which would determine who would be invited to sit on the platform with the government officials and how close each would sit to the collector.

In comparison with municipal addresses, the form of local durbars was fairly flexible and changed over time. The greatest of these occasions, such as the local Delhi Durbar celebration in 1911, were accompanied by elaborate activities, including processions of municipal school children, giving sweets to these children, handing out awards to prize students, distributing food to the poor, displaying fireworks, and illuminating important public buildings. These grander aspects were generally missing in the annual affairs. Yet in the central event—the durbar itself—there were important elements that remained relatively constant. Usually the observance opened with the arrival of the collector, who was welcomed by a salute from an armed guard or the playing of a bugle. He gave a speech emphasizing some civic issue—the value of public service, the virtues of philanthropy, the observance of law and order, or even the need for the municipality to replace indirect taxes with direct levies. At the durbar of 1902, Collector Sladen spoke in honor of the valuable work of two new titleholders, the Parsi municipal councillor, Khan Bahadur Barjorji Nasserwanji Vakil, and the Jain merchant, Rao Bahadur Hirachand Motichand, particularly praising their extensive activities during the plague of 1898.[70] An observance in 1911 included a lecture on fiscal responsibility directed to the municipal councillors as well as announcements concerning the upcoming local celebration of the Delhi Durbar.[71]

The participation of the notables in such ceremonies was generally more one of gesture and demeanor than of words. They sat through

the ceremony silently in their positions of privilege, with a solemnity befitting the occasion and their personal status, perhaps shaking the collector's hand at the event's end. Their acceptance of the seating arrangements on the dais, where the central seats were reserved for high-ranking civil servants, implied not only a position of honor in the city but also recognition of the authority of the Raj.

Exceptions to this pattern of unspoken communication occurred when titles were awarded. Each recipient was expected to respond to the collector's commendation. These speeches observed a common tone, one of great humility. Barjorji Vakil, in his speech in 1902, insisted that he had only done his duty during the plague, praised the help he received from a series of British officers during his public career, acknowledged the support of others on the plague committee and municipal council, and affirmed his desire to prove himself worthy of the honor by continued loyal service.[72] Umedram Ranchhordas, a retired government officer awarded a *Rao Bahadur*ship, was even more self-effacing in a ceremony held in his honor in 1894. He opened his speech by stating, "It is my duty to thank in the first place the benign British government, which has been graciously pleased in recognition of my humble services to confer on me the distinction." He went on to express his appreciation for the help of British officers during his lifetime: "I shall not be so ungrateful as to believe or to let it be understood that I could have performed one tenth of the work that fell to my lot had I not received support and encouragement from my immediate superiors and the appreciation and commendation of Government from time to time."[73] The modest tone of the statements made on such an occasion of exceptional honor was an expected behavior. The speaker's humility served as confirmation that he embodied the qualities of the ideal public servant who toiled selflessly for the good of the city and the empire. By stressing his loyalty and the importance of support from his superiors, the titleholder also confirmed British authority. In short, the speeches at durbars were at once a subtle form of claiming status and a means of expressing deference to British rulers.

Notable-Planned Rites

In such carefully orchestrated occasions as the municipal address and the durbar, it is often difficult to assess the commitment of local leaderships to the occasion. But evidence of considerable elite enthusiasm is clearly present in the less-planned observances that surrounded such events. On many occasions prominent local men went far beyond the government's minimal expectations and made special contributions—for instance, by mobilizing their coreligionists for the ceremony, by fixing expensive illuminations on their homes, or by hanging banners

with slogans such as "Long Live Emperor Edward VII" or "God Save the King" outside their houses. In a few instances, the notables were responsible for organizing the entire ritual occasion. In 1900, Nawab Mir Muzaffar Hussein Khan invited the citizens of Surat to his palace for the purpose of expressing thanksgiving for the British victory in the Boer War. Leading members of all the communities in the city attended. Numerous speeches were given, each of which, reported the *Gujarat Mitra,* "breathed a spirit of intense loyalty to the crown of Her Gracious Majesty." At the end of the gathering, those present offered a prayer to "God almighty to bless British Arms and the British flag." One participant even suggested establishing a committee to raise funds for widows and orphans of the soldiers who had died in defense of the empire. Attendees sang "God Save the Queen" and raised three cheers each for the Empress Victoria, Lord Roberts (commander of British forces in South Africa), and the British flag. A journalist commented afterward that the event confirmed Surat's traditional claim to be the "cradle of the British Empire in India," since the city had organized its own celebration before Bombay, which usually took the lead in public affairs.[74]

There were even instances when the enthusiasm of local elites in celebration of empire went beyond the bounds of imperial propriety. One such case took place in 1901, when leading residents arranged a series of events to honor the departing collector, Mr. Weir. First, several neighborhood groups organized festivities for Weir and his wife in their own localities. A few citizens invited the couple into their homes for tea, coffee, and refreshments. Later that evening, the municipality organized an evening party for the collector at the home of a Muslim *sheth,* to which all the Europeans of the city and their wives were invited. After entertainment—playing European songs on the piano—Khan Bahadur Moulvi Abdul Kader Bakza and others made speeches praising Weir for his efforts during the plague of 1897 and the famine of 1899–1900. The following day there was a huge gathering in Victoria Gardens, with school children in parade, athletic demonstrations, and band music. Then residents escorted the collector through the streets of the city to the railway station with representatives of local groups stopping his carriage repeatedly to garland him. When Weir arrived in Bombay, a group of Surti *sheth*s presented another address to Weir at a party in Madhav Bagh.[75]

Local newspapers reported these activities as special, joyous celebrations honoring a popular official. But civil servants in Bombay regarded the festivities more grimly. In the General Department, officials suggested that the events had violated administrative regulations prohibiting government servants from "receiving addresses and testimoni-

als" and from attending "complimentary entertainments of a formal and public character." The various parties in Surat, one memo reported, "may be said to be of a private character," but the "demonstration held in the Victoria Gardens appears to have been of a public character. A fund of Rs 1,100 was collected for the occasion. There were sports and tamashas and bands, and the school children carrying flags marched in procession." Others questioned whether even the parties were entirely of a private character, since they were held "under the auspices" of the city's most prominent citizens; obviously the specter of Indians' crossing over into social rites that were usually exclusively European struck some officials as posing a danger to the civil service's reputation of objectivity. The procession to the station drew the sharpest criticisms. One outraged administrator commented that the collector's carriage and its entourage seemed "to have partaken of the nature of a royal progress."[76] Weir embarrassedly defended himself by claiming that the various parties he had attended "were not of a public nature" and that "the demonstrations on the road to the railway station were unpremeditated and were distasteful to myself and if the train had not been an hour late in arriving would have caused us to miss the train."[77]

Because these ceremonies were planned by indigenous elites, they provide an especially interesting opportunity to suggest how Surti understandings of their ritual activity might have differed from those of their rulers. Prominent local residents certainly acknowledged the importance of loyalty and civic consciousness in ritual, but they sometimes injected expressions of personal deference that violated British standards of appropriateness. Ritual occasions were chances to express and build bonds of clientship with the colonial authorities. Thus, to give a "royal" celebration to a district officer or to conflate the "public" and the "private" in the observance of a ceremonial occasion hardly seemed problematic. Certainly by combining elements involved in the durbar, the imperial visit, and the European social party, the "native gentlemen" of Surat had given their own twists of meaning to forms of ritual expression initially designed by their rulers.

The personal and community stake involved in imperial observances was quite great. In ritual, status was confirmed, and honor lost or won. Even the seating arrangements made by the district establishment could become the subject of intense local contests. In 1877, Hindus and Jains protested that the Modi, the representative of the Parsi community, had been given a seat of greater prominence than the Nagarsheth, their community head, at a durbar, forcing the government to move the Nagarsheth to a more honorable position.[78] Local newspapers regularly offered comments and complaints about the adequacy of seating

arrangements at ceremonies or the completeness of the collector's list of *darbaris*.[79]

Those who took leading roles in ritual confirmed their positions as natural leaders of local religious groupings as they expressed their identification with city and empire. On Edward VII's birthday in 1909, the Anjuman-e-Islam, composed mainly of the old Mughal gentry, sent a delegation to the collector's house to congratulate him on behalf of the Muslim community; the Nagarsheth presided over a *puja* (a ceremony of worship) on the banks of the Tapi, in which Hindus and Jains wished the emperor well; and the *da'i* of the Bohras and the Modi of the Parsis sent telegrams from their communities to the viceroy.[80] In such instances, the magnates employed a double language: they simultaneously made statements in the idiom of empire and the idiom of community. British civil servants certainly had no objection to what they seemed to view as a quaint injection of indigenous elements into the larger ceremony.

It may be that ritual activities assumed special importance primarily because the expression of loyalty called no principle of great indigenous concern into doubt. During an era in which deference had not yet been seriously challenged by Indian nationalists, elites who publicly participated in imperial ceremony did not endanger their own local authority. Nonetheless the notables sometimes needed to take steps to ensure that involvement in imperial ceremony would not harm their reputations. In the at-home parties at the residence of the collector, organizers had to make separate provisions in the refreshments for members of each community present so that commensal rules would not be violated through attendance. A few even refused to adopt the ritual dress expected for imperial observances. At his own durbar in 1900, Hirachand Motichand, the Jain pearl merchant, stunned those present by opting for a simple white dhoti and red turban, perhaps because he did not wish to be stigmatized for wearing the rather ostentatious dress and headdress expected of a representative of his community. In general, the notables were able to participate in such a way that they did not offend their patrons, but also did not endanger their status within their communities. Involvement in such events was by no means a sign that they had merged their identities with the alien ruling group.[81]

By taking part in civic and imperial observances, local elites actively contributed to the construction of British authority; they openly demonstrated their commitment to the Raj and to the principles for which the Raj stood. They were not merely passive participants in a ritual order foisted on them by their rulers but often introduced elements into ceremonies that the British did not intend, thus giving civic and

imperial ceremony a distinctively Anglo-Indian shape. As a result, while urban ritual took its form from the rulers, it drew much of its content from the Surtis.

NOTABLES AND PRESSURE-GROUP POLITICS

A final civic identity potentially open to the city's notability was as representatives of public opinion. The idiom of pressure-group politics offered to local leaders a means of making their concerns and the concerns of their followings felt in imperial circles. While they usually lacked formal schooling in English, the notables quickly acquired an ability to couch their arguments for justice in a form meaningful to the district and provincial officers. But the elite of Surat engaged in public meetings and public associations only warily, always trying to avoid a confrontational posture that might lead them to be cast as dangerous and seditious men. Thus, even as the magnates opposed certain colonial policies, they struggled to maintain a posture of deference and humility.

An example of the delicacy with which the idiom of public politics was balanced against the need to maintain ties of dependency upon government officials comes from a movement against the license tax, which had been imposed on all local businesses in 1878. For local merchants, this tax was an especially objectionable measure because it required them to supply detailed information about their firms' operations, thus potentially violating the secrecy upon which their reputations were based. After the provincial government sanctioned the measure, there was a quick response from the business community. The Nagarsheth and the Mahajan Sheth—men recognized as the chief headmen of the Hindu-Jains—issued a notice calling for a public meeting to draft a petition to protest the measure. The two *sheths* insisted that provincial authorities had erred in levying the tax without consulting the people and that the measure would impose a great strain on the "poor" traders of the city at a time of great inflation. In effect they translated the community's concerns with *abru* into the terms of extra-parliamentary justice, calling upon British assumptions that there should be no taxation without representation and that the merchants' poverty should militate against an increase in their payments. At the public meeting, the leading merchants decided that the city's shopkeepers should close their stores in protest. Key figures among the Parsis and Bohras lent their support to the resolution.

When the collector asked many of these same figures to attempt to induce the business community to reopen its shops, however, they stated their agreement with this request and stated that the shops

would be opened shortly. Nonetheless, the shops did not reopen. The struggle soon took a violent turn. A riot broke out in outlying neighborhoods, in which European officers and several Indian policemen were attacked. Uncertain of their best course, the leading merchants continued to take an ambivalent position. To use the words of the district magistrate, they "either held aloof, or made professions of assistance but did nothing and urgently pressed that the enactment in question might be allowed to remain a dead letter pending a reference to Government." The great *sheths* clearly were reluctant to cut themselves off from their community by supporting government measures wholeheartedly, but they were also hesitant to sacrifice their ties with the government by defiantly acting as advocates of the people. They made use of the idiom of public politics for a brief period but refrained from pushing this idiom as far as it might go. Gradually they withdrew their backing from the movement, and the effort collapsed.[82]

Involvement of the notables in organizations that criticized government policy on a regular basis was limited. The formation of voluntary associations claiming to represent the people was largely the work of English-educated professionals, not the local magnates. In 1896 Frederick Lely reported that the notability's participation in the Indian National Congress was negligible. Leading Muslims were as "staunch to the cause of order as if they were Englishmen," he claimed, and "all the Hindus of weight, without, so far as I know, any exception, resolutely hold aloof from political agitation."[83] The absence of the natural leaders in local voluntary associations allowed British officials to dismiss these institutions as weak and nonrepresentative. Discussing a petition of the Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha (Society for the Advancement of the People's Welfare), the assistant collector remarked that the organization "does not seem to rank among its members any very influential persons."[84] Notable reluctance to associate with public associations weakened as these organizations gained stature during the first decade of the twentieth century, but their participation remained confined to associations that had won a certain respectability in imperial circles. After 1906, the Surat District Association, a local branch of the Indian National Congress, included among its membership a number of Hindu and Jain *sheths* such as Naginchand Jhaverchand and Ishwardas Jagjivandas Store. Even so, these merchants remained in the background, providing financial support but rarely becoming conspicuous in any public agitation.

A form of a collective assembly called a public meeting did become an aspect of notable political activity during the second half of the nineteenth century. But most of these meetings were not gatherings of irate citizens against their government; rather they were solemn rituals

closely controlled by their elite organizers to avoid the potential for disloyal expression. Often the purpose of the meeting was to convey congratulations or grief at some event of imperial significance or to express mild dissatisfaction with some specific policy. The head of the Modi family, as head of the Parsis; the Nawab of Surat or the head of the Edrus family, as representative of the Muslims; and the Nagarsheth or the Mahajan Sheth, as leaders of the Hindu-Jains, called meetings by affixing their signatures to a printed announcement. When Nawab Mir Muzaffar Hussein Khan was so presumptuous as to call a meeting on his own in 1893, Hindus and Parsis complained that he had insulted their communities by violating customary practice.[85] For the most part, Surat's magnates drew on the language of constitutional justice to a limited extent and in a manner compatible with their desire to maintain stable links with their rulers and their statuses as natural leaders. The notables did little to generate a public autonomous of the state and willing to offer regular criticisms of colonial policy.

The language of public politics, however, was not the only alien idiom with which pressure could be placed upon the rulers; notables also launched claims to political justice within colonial discourse, appealing to the promises of the Raj that it would work to preserve the traditional customs of the Indians. Often they directly invoked the principles of Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858, which had guaranteed that the British would "refrain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of our subjects" and had confirmed that "due regard" would be paid "to the ancient rights, usages, and customs of India."[86] Invoking these guarantees served to defend elite concerns about not putting deferential relationships with the overlords at risk. In 1891, for instance, a meeting of the Hindu Mahajan contested the passage of the Age of Consent Bill by the Imperial Legislative Council by insisting that the government uphold its own ideals of religious tolerance. This bill clearly had produced strong feelings among the city's merchants. Some suggested that a doctor's examination might be needed to determine whether a girl was old enough to be married, thus endangering family honor. The *mahajan* "humbly" urged the viceroy to reconsider the measure, claiming that the bill violated religious sentiments and ancient customs protected by Victoria's proclamation. After acknowledging the "blessings" that had been bestowed on a "weak" people by their beneficent government, the petitioners spelled out the harm to the community traditions that would result if the measure remained law, though they also argued that the people, not the government, were the rightful arbiter of what religious customs they would follow.[87] Three years later leaders of the Parsi Panchayat invoked similar claims to justice when they called upon the government to extend flood protective works to

include an *agiyari* (Parsi temple) at the edge of the city. If flood protection were not provided, they complained, "no earthly compensation would avail to restore the wounded feelings of the Parsi community. . . . Such desecration of an old standing place of worship is calculated to hurt seriously the religious feelings of not only the Parsis of Surat but of all Indians in general."[88] In both cases the notables hoped to induce government to reconsider a position by defining the issue as one of religion and "custom." In each instance, a local leader questioned a government policy, but he couched these criticisms within a deferential conception of ruler-subject relations. Indeed, by suggesting that the policy violated avowed British values, he effectively confirmed imperial principle.

Members of the Mughal gentry likewise began to assert claims to special government attention as leaders of a religious community during this same period. The Muslim leadership went further than notables in other communities by organizing pressure groups such as the Anjuman-e-Islam and the Mohamedan Union to represent its concerns. While claiming to speak for the Muslims of the city as a whole, these two organizations were quite narrow in their composition. The affairs of the Anjuman-e-Islam were dominated totally by a few gentry families and by a Muslim *sheth* who had made a fortune in Mauritius, Haji Ibrahim Turava. The head of the Edrus family enjoyed the position of president of the Anjuman hereditarily, the head of the Bakza family the secretaryship. The Mohamedan Union, organized mainly to promote education for Muslims, had an identical membership, though the district collector served as its president.[89] Members made little attempt to draw in the larger Muslim population of the city. A critic with the *Gujarat Mitra* once snidely referred to the Anjuman as a "few office-bearing aristocrats who care to know very little about what takes place outside the four walls of the palaces in which they dwell," and suggested that one of their gatherings "was, in fact, a drawing-room meeting . . . consisting of the President, a couple of secretaries, and a few friends who had been invited to smoke a hookah for the evening."[90] Though these comments no doubt reflected personal resentment of the political influence of the Anjuman's leaders, they also contained some element of truth. Muslim associational politics had not extended beyond the handful of Surti families who claimed descent from the old rulers of India. When there were no pressing issues affecting this gentry's status, the Muslim organizations fell into extended periods of inactivity.

The gentry employed the Anjuman as a forum for sending deputations to government and for drawing up occasional addresses and petitions. Though submissive in tone, their memorials developed distinc-

tively Muslim claims to imperial favor. An address given in 1890 to Lord Harris, governor of Bombay, assured the dignitary that "we stand second to none in our loyalty and devotion to the British crown." It made a case for the "backwardness" of the city's Muslims, suggesting that some of the old nobility were now "on the verge of ruin" and that the Muslims' state was "deplorable and pitiful." It pleaded for British support for Muslim education and for more Muslim nominations to the municipal and provincial councils. Clearly the petitioners framed their own claims to justice in part through reference to the Britishers' self-perception as guardians of the weak and impoverished communities.[91]

All these appeals, like the merchant petitions to the East India Company a century earlier, were both deferential and demanding. Sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, each set of petitioners acknowledged their subordination and dependence as a legitimate state of affairs, but each insisted that the Raj, by virtue of the "magnanimous" principles that entitled it to rule over the subcontinent, had special obligations to its subjects it could not fail to honor. In each case as well, appeals for justice went hand in hand with the process of defining self. Through attempts to defend their concerns by invoking religious principle, notable petitioners reinforced their images as natural leaders. They insisted that their concerns expressed the interests of a whole religious community and that they were the only authoritative spokespersons for that community. Such attempts to gain the ear of high-level administrators contributed to the consolidation of their identities as "representative men" whom the overlords could not afford to ignore.

CONCLUSION

Notable participation in the outer domain of politics thus reflects both continuities and discontinuities from previous eras. As in the precolonial period, local magnates appropriated a political idiom from an alien ruling group in order to make sense of their involvement in and contacts with the state. They fashioned deferential relations through their rhetorical and ritual activity, bestowing upon the Anglo-Indian civil servants authority as political overlords while establishing their own moral claims to patronage and justice. The specific language of magnate-ruler interaction, however, had changed significantly. The politics of the Mughal courts had given way to the municipal council and the pressure group; the politics of tribute to that of philanthropy. Underlying these changes was a gradual shift away from the personal idiom of Mughal and company rule to a political style centering on civic commitments.

At this point, it might be useful to restate the argument of this chapter in terms of the more theoretical language set out in the opening

sections of this study. Five main propositions about change in political culture can be deduced from the rather descriptive discussion above.

First, the emerging civic culture created by the notables reflected the successful consolidation of British cultural hegemony. In their various public actions, Surti leaderships effectively gave consent to the larger distribution of power within colonial India and accepted values espoused by the colonizers as the key principles governing certain spheres of activity. Hegemony was indicated in the deference the notables communicated to the representatives of empire and more specifically in their adoption of public and colonial discourse from their rulers. The four manifestations of public culture discussed here all carried with them implicit assumptions about what were legitimate forms of political authority and what were valid principles of political justice. For the notables, idioms derived from the rulers created new boundaries of appropriate self-expression, discouraging the formulation of alternative political orders at a time when serious discontent had emerged. The politics of ruler-subject relations had thus become lodged within a larger world system of ideas.

Second, the hegemony of colonial rule which the notables accepted and indeed helped to construct served important needs of the local magnates. The fundamental problem which local elites faced in the nineteenth century, as throughout the city's history, was that an alien ruling group, with social and cultural preoccupations that diverged radically from those of city dwellers, exercised a near-monopoly over the means of coercion. The colonial agenda of improvement posed a potential and continuing threat to the autonomy of the indigenous sphere and to the viability of local leaderships. The notables coped with uncertainty through a politics of deference. In acknowledging imperial supremacy, they achieved recognition of their own claims to political power and justice within the Raj. Submissiveness—expressed in terms the British considered appropriate—continued to be a means of converting power relations into moral relations. Because local elites actively contributed to the authority of colonial rule and because public culture served certain notable purposes, it would be mistaken to insist that hegemony was imposed from above or that notable consciousness was a false consciousness.

Third, the hegemony reflected in public culture was a negotiated and partial one. Notables worked within the limitations of colonially derived discourse, but they interpreted its symbols and terminology in light of their own preoccupations. They called upon the ruling group to honor obligations to the values it had espoused. They injected elements of personal deference into a public discourse theoretically

founded upon impersonal principles of justice. In some cases they used their political influence to accomplish ends that were antithetical to colonial purpose, such as the enhancement of their personal reputations and the protection of the indigenous domain from further intrusions by government. Often these efforts were quite effective. Despite statements from the colonizers that the improving ethic involved being at war with normal practice, urban reform proceeded in piecemeal fashion, leaving much of the autonomy of the inner spheres of local politics intact and the control of local leaderships within those spheres only partially eroded. Thus we can continue to picture local magnates of the early twentieth century as participating in two cultural domains, a public sphere and an indigenous one, each characterized by its own languages. For most Surtis, the inner arena remained the more critical of the two.

Fourth, the negotiated versions of colonial ideology were multiple. Four distinct subcultures, each associated with a particular religious community, took shape: the Muslim, the Bohra, the Parsi, and the Hindu-Jain. The character of these subcultures was a product of the interaction between two forces, the conceptions of public and natural leadership derived from colonial thinking and the ongoing efforts of local elites to construct a culture that fit their needs.

Finally, the cultural accommodation of the Surtis was an elite accommodation. Until the 1880s, the notables had a near monopoly over the idioms of public politics and access to the colonial rulers. Others without appropriate bilingual skills were shut out from access to the district and provincial authorities except insofar as they aligned themselves with notable leaderships. In effect the magnates managed to isolate the concerns of the urban underclass from the civic arena. Their efforts to act as patrons for their communities, to offer piecemeal, everyday resistance to specific imperial policies, and to sustain patterns of religious giving—all acts grounded in precolonial idioms of politics—bolstered their own authority but also ensured that plebeian society remained distant from the public sphere and that no truly counterhegemonic culture emerged from below.

The position of the city's notables, however, was a vulnerable one. The contradictions between their civic roles and their roles as natural leaders, between their status as political dependents of the government officials and as representatives of public opinion, between their roles as agents of reform and as authority figures in precolonial social formations that resisted the agenda of progress, were readily apparent to Surtis with a more complete command over public discourse. The emergence of persons with substantial secular schooling and exposure

to English political traditions during the 1880s presented a real challenge to the notables' privileged position as intermediaries. The English-educated politicians were able to use their mastery over the idiom of public politics to outflank and undermine the power of the notables in the civic arena. In the course of this challenge, the new elite reshaped the basic form of public culture, fashioning for the first time the contours of a liberal representative polity.

EIGHT

The English-educated Elite and Public Leadership

In 1880 the foundations of the British Raj in Surat rested largely upon informal ties between a foreign administrative elite and the men the administrators accepted as leaders of the city's religious communities. By 1914, on the eve of World War I, notables no longer controlled the key mediating roles in the city. Lawyers, doctors, and other English-educated professionals, most of whom could not have achieved recognition as headmen of local social groups, had captured the municipality and positions as the most significant advisers of the British officials.

To a great extent, the members of this English-educated "elite" acquired privileged places in the political system of the Raj because they were able to present themselves and to cast their appeals for justice in terms that were especially compelling to the colonial rulers.[1] Drawing upon models of British municipal and parliamentary politics, they projected a self-image as leaders of a public that cut across the boundaries of Surat's ethnic groupings. They called upon the officials of the empire to uphold and honor principles held most dear in the culture of England itself, principles such as progress, the public good, the will of the people, and patriotism. They fashioned new institutional forms grounded in the experience of British history—voluntary associations, educational societies, cooperative unions, and the press—from which they could make claims to the attention of government. Even those members of the ruling group reluctant to concede the existence of public opinion or a conception of the public good among Indians were forced to consider these appeals lodged in the most prestigious of all British political idioms. At the same time, groups and leaderships deeper in Surti society, eager to influence colonial policy and con-

cerned to defend themselves against potentially threatening imperial initiatives, came to rely on these persons who possessed such a special ability to communicate in the strange language of the civil servants.

Recourse to the language of public politics allowed members of the English-educated elite to exercise a much greater assertiveness in their politics than the notables ever had. Gradually they broke with the deferential style that had constrained the notability, offering in its place a more contentious, litigious manner of conducting politics. They discovered in civic discourse a vehicle for prodding, questioning, even confronting the district establishment. But even as they adopted more aggressive political styles, they became confined in a new conceptual straitjacket. In attempting to influence colonial decision making, they conceded that local politics would be played out within an alien language that confirmed the myth of Western superiority and that stripped Indian cultures of much of their dignity. Their rhetoric implicitly acknowledged the colonial view that India was behind Britain in its evolutionary development and that it could prepare to assume a greater role in self-government only gradually; they may have disputed with each other and with their rulers where on the linear scale of history their city and their country should be ranked, but they acknowledged the scale itself. They also accepted the notion that large sections of the Indian population were incapable of full-fledged participation in the creation of a new political order and that certain indigenous notions, such as *dharma* and *abru,* had little place in shaping civic policy. Much of their rhetoric implied an acceptance of British rule and the necessity for a continued colonial role in arbitrating Indian political conflict. In short, they forced political discussion and debate in the city to shift to a new terrain, but they did so in a way that reshaped rather than undermined colonial hegemony. The language that they developed inhibited the formulation of a more thoroughgoing critique of the political order that might have informed a sustained, collective resistance to the Raj.

The self-image of public leader was primarily one that defined a relationship wih the rulers of India, not with residents of the city. Public discourse, which denigrated or treated as irrelevant the principles by which most Surtis gave meaning to their own lives, was hardly an effective vehicle for gaining the support of the larger population. Yet leadership in the civic arena required the local politician to muster at least the tacit backing of urban householders, particularly at election time. Members of the English-educated elite achieved this end less by transforming public discourse into a more populist form than by resorting to a second set of languages rooted in the subcultures of specific local communities, especially that of the Brahman-Vaniyas. Rather than de-

veloping their own constituencies, in fact, they often relied on powerful urban magnates with substantial local followings, particularly Hindu and Jain *sheths*. They were in effect political bilinguals, who could communicate in at least two rhetorical modes and move at least partially within the cultural spheres of both the ruler and the ruled. Their bilingualism blocked most residents from access to the civic arena, where critical decisions about local life were increasingly being made.

ORIGINS OF THE ENGLISH-EDUCATED ELITE

Surat's emergent public leadership was composed of men drawn from diverse caste and religious backgrounds. They shared their relatively high status, their English education, and their positions as brokers in the city's politics. Most of those who rose to influence in the civic arena of politics by the early twentieth century were either Brahmans, Kayasthas, or Parsis. Many came from families with proud heritages of administrative work, literary genius, and reforming zeal. Nagar Brahmans, the most prestigious of all urban castes in Gujarat, had staffed government bureaucracies in the region for centuries. By the early nineteenth century some Nagars had assumed positions of importance in the colonial government and in the administrations of a number of princely states in Gujarat and Saurashtra. The Nagars of Surat were among the earliest to take up the new professions after midcentury.[2] Anavil Brahmans, by contrast, had been tied more closely to agrarian society. In precolonial times a few had functioned as *desais*, semi-official revenue agents analogous to the zamindars of northern India. Under colonial rule, a number of Anavil families remained powerful in the countryside as controllers of land and credit, but others parlayed their wealth and influence into remunerative careers in government, law, and education in centers like Surat and Bombay.[3] The Parsis, as we have seen, developed close ties to the British as early as the seventeenth century, when some became important agents of the East India Company. After the center of company activity shifted to Bombay, thousands migrated southward to the growing port city. Of those that remained in Surat, the most influential left business for positions in the early colonial administration.[4] In addition to those from these service groupings were a few men from the "business communities," especially Hindu and Jain Vaniyas, who had always had some representatives working in administrative fields and who gradually moved into the new professions that required English education over the course of the nineteenth century.[5]

While all members of the new civic elite came from high-status communities, very few could have won recognition as natural leaders.

Though there was no necessary separation between the notability and those who played the most prominent roles in local public organizations after the 1880s, the overlap was quite small. Since, to the British, natural leadership was defined in part by hereditary qualities, it was difficult for those outside a restricted set of families to acquire such recognition. The notion of public leadership—historically based on the challenges of commoners to aristocratic authority—was potentially open to a much broader range of persons. In practice, however, the new elite was only marginally wider than the notability, since only persons with very high levels of English education could fully command the vocabulary and grammar necessary to enter its ranks.

Before the late nineteenth century, knowledge of English was monopolized by a few families who could arrange private tutors for their promising offspring. Only after the founding of the Irish Presbyterian Mission School and the Surat High School in the 1840s did the path to institutions of higher learning begin to widen. By the 1880s Surat was sending a handful of students each year to liberal arts colleges such as Elphinstone College, Wilson College, and the University of Bombay (all in Bombay), or Fergusson College in Poona, and to professional schools such as the Grant Medical College and the Government Law College in Bombay. There they established links with future political leaders of the presidency, built new ties, and became exposed to British political theory.[6]

English schools and colleges undoubtedly provided critical socializing for the boys and young men who attended them. Exposed to an education in which praise of British practice and criticism of Indian custom were common, many went out into their society ready to implement reform. Yet it should not be assumed that contact with Western ideas alone was responsible for transforming their ways of thinking. What is missing from most studies of English education is a consideration of the social context of learning, particularly of the relations of power involved. In their schools students learned to win the approval of (or to annoy) teachers, principals, and upperclassmen as they competed for grades and prizes in academic and athletic competitions and appropriated skills that could lead to success in the larger colonial world. Many sought acknowledgment as youth of promise from powerful Englishmen or prominent Indian politicians in the presidency cities. Success in these efforts involved developing a mastery over idioms meaningful to these reference groups and persons. Students also tended to be selective about which Western ideas they appropriated as their own. Though they often adopted the language of public politics in an almost pure form, Surti politicians rarely chose to emulate European familial norms, to abandon their castes, or to convert to Chris-

tianity, despite extensive exposure to the social and religious criticisms of English reformers and missionaries. They accommodated themselves most strongly to the British values that seemed relevant in the most critical arenas of colonial politics. The model of Western education and Indian response fails both to recognize the importance of domination to the adoption of ostensibly Western notions and to account for the discrimination students displayed in absorbing foreign concepts. A fuller understanding of value transformation in Indian schools requires recognition that education is itself a political process that involves power, negotiation, and sometimes resistance.[7]

A full investigation of the processes of educational socialization, however, lies outside the scope of this work. For the immediate purposes of this study it is sufficient to view schools as the first in a series of heavily politicized contexts in which young Indian men learned to generate new cultural meanings and as places where they acquired a practical competence in specialized skills they could put to use in later activities: control over the English language, a command over the canon of European political philosophy, familiarity with the traditions of British local and parliamentary politics, an understanding of law, and proficiency in debate and drafting petitions. Outside the walls of their classrooms, of course, they also were exposed to models of political action already in use by prominent Indian leaders in the presidency cities.

Those who returned to Surat for careers discovered that the knowledge acquired during their schooling stood them in good stead in local society. Lawyers, doctors, journalists, and engineers all found themselves in demand, not simply in their professional fields but also as spokesmen for local groups that wished to influence government policy. When the principle of election was established for half the positions on the city's municipality in 1883, English-educated men easily sought and won positions as councillors. Over the next thirty years the vast majority of elected members on the municipality were drawn from the professions.[8]

With the introduction of the elective principle, many local magnates began to withdraw from direct participation in the municipal arena and turned to English-educated professionals to represent their interests in civic politics. Some Hindu and Jain *sheths* were already beginning to find themselves ill-equipped to deal with the sophisticated and mystifying system of municipal law, the ritualized rules of procedure at work in council meetings, and the rhetoric of political rights and responsibilities to which councillors needed to appeal in effectively pressing their cases. A few may have feared losing face among their peers by engaging in an activity that was now under the constant scrutiny of the press. Support for persons more skilled in the language of the foreign rulers

thus had considerable advantages over direct immersion in municipal politics.

Lawyers, doctors, and journalists also came to be indispensable in generating pressure on the council from outside. Effective campaigns against local regulations required specialized knowledge of the procedures for filing objections in municipal, provincial, and imperial offices as well as a command over the applicable principles of British justice. Educated men often developed a wide repertoire of constitutional tactics. When the municipality decided to institute a house tax to fund a major waterworks during the early 1890s, Hardevram Haridas, a leading figure in the Indian National Congress, submitted dozens of objections to the measure, forcing the council to consider each one by one. Once this strategy was exhausted, he organized several petition drives against the measure, the largest gathering many thousand signatures. Eventually this effort failed too, but Hardevram was not done; he filed seventeen thousand separate cases in local courts on behalf of Surat's citizens. These efforts effectively delayed the plan nearly four years and made government hesitant to impose further taxation for some time afterward.[9] The building of a drainage system needed to carry waste out of the city was delayed for five decades. In the meantime much of the hugely increased volume of water supplied by the new waterworks seeped into the ground, creating conditions far more unsanitary than before.

The municipality was not the only point of contact between the Raj and the city's population, but its politics exemplified the general problems posed by the changing nature of colonial rule during the later nineteenth century. The growing importance of legislatures, law, and bureaucratic principles of rule made it increasingly difficult for unschooled residents to negotiate effectively with government. Symbolic specialists—that is, the English-educated politicians—came to assume greater significance as brokers in many areas. Slowly they expanded the scope of their activity, establishing new institutions and a new style of communicating with the ruling group.

THE ENGLISH-EDUCATED ELITE AND PUBLIC CULTURE

The function of a broker was hardly a new one in the politics of urban India. In fact, one major interpretation of English-educated politicians—that of the Cambridge school—has tended to view such persons as playing the traditional role of publicist to powerful patrons, albeit in new political arenas established by the British.[10] This interpretation recognizes the considerable backing that public figures of the time of-

ten had from powerful magnates within their society and the continuity of some specific publicist-patron relationships over many decades. However, it downplays the fact that English-educated men were defining their sociopolitical identities in a largely new way. In Surat, beginning about 1880, a handful of people who sought to influence colonial policy began to fashion a collective identity as public leaders—that is, as ones who cared about the welfare of the entire urban citizenry, who represented the interests of the people, and who identified with India as a nation. As public leaders, they became involved not only in pursuing the concerns of their patrons in the municipality and other colonial institutions but also in expanding civic life to include more schools for the city's boys and girls, cooperative credit societies to provide loans to farmers of the surrounding countryside, and public associations that could pressure the government in the name of the urban citizenry. One might say they created a broker culture distinct from that of their indigenous patrons, a culture that in effect became their own preserve. The larger population, unable to capture the nuances of expression key to participation in the civic arena, was essentially denied access to it.

Members of the English-educated elite developed their self-image in the course of their politics, shaping their cultural world through encounters with the colonial rulers. Whether seeking government patronage or opposing imperial policies, they cared greatly what the civil servants of the Raj thought about them and consistently sought official recognition of their place in urban politics and their claims to justice. In framing presentations of themselves as public leaders, the English-educated men indicated that their political roles were not confined to the narrow loyalties of caste and religion but embraced the interests of the city as a whole. Implicitly acknowledging the social evolutionary theories of Europe, which posited a universal tendency for societies to move from collectivities organized along local and primordial lines to nationalities built around universalistic loyalties, they suggested that their own emergence marked a new stage in Surat's political development. If, according to the viceroy Lord Ripon, power was to be slowly devolved upon a small group of enlightened Indians, then they, the English-educated reasoned, were the persons who should assume the responsibilities of self-government and the political education of their fellow city dwellers.

The notion of public leadership, as the emergent elite used it, carried three meanings which overlapped imperfectly. First, there was the *reformist dimension,* which suggested the concern with the public good and agreement with the imperial rulers' expressed goal of transforming India into a modern, industrial society. Second was the *popular di-*

mension, which involved advocacy of the interests of the people or the public—an undifferentiated collectivity that cut across the descent-based social groupings of the city. Finally, there was the *national dimension,* which stressed identification with India as a nation and with emerging nationalist organizations. Each of these dimensions was critical to the elite's self-image, but one or more of these dimensions might be stressed according to the particular context in which an individual was putting forth his claims. Each was also to some extent open to interpretation. In part, the politics of English-educated politicians were an ongoing struggle to construct the meaning of public leadership along these three dimensions and to win colonial acceptance of their constructions.

Much in the rhetorical and institutional behavior of English-educated politicians might seem unremarkable to a Western or modern Indian audience. But we need to recognize that there was a time in Surat when the language of public politics was largely novel and foreign. In order to capture its novelty, the reader might try to enter the perspective of Surat's underclasses, who must have regarded civic politics as an esoteric cult—one to whose sacred incantations they were not privy—that determined access to the alien ruling group. Only by imagining the "otherness" in the language of public politics can we avoid the assumption that there was anything natural or inevitable about its formation and grasp how the particular context of power conditioned the creation of the liberal political order.

THE REFORMIST DIMENSION

Every educated politician in Surat saw himself as a public reformer. As men committed to the "common good" and to "progress," members of the new elite participated in institutions whose declared purpose was the reform and improvement of Surat and India. They proclaimed an identification with the welfare of the city and a concern with the education, industrialization, agricultural development, and improved sanitation of India. They shared with British officials the view that India should be led along the same path of civic and economic development as England. Implicit in such a stance was a claim to be persons of advanced views who were entitled to great political powers. The identity of reformer usually involved consciously setting oneself against the bulk of Surat's residents, who were commonly depicted as too ignorant or too motivated by parochial interests to perceive the long-term good of the city.

Before the twentieth century, municipal activity was the main arena in which English-educated politicians could achieve recognition as "dis-

interested public servants." Some became champions of sanitary improvement, road construction, and primary education. In a few cases, their reforming zeal led directly to great local unpopularity. Indeed some members of the elite felt they served their city best by resisting popular pressures and by pressing forward with the agenda of progress. Between 1892 and 1894, the majority of Surat's municipal councillors, including nine of the fifteen elected members, supported the government's house-tax scheme despite formidable opposition in the city. Frederick Lely, the district collector, commended this stalwart commitment to reform, writing his superiors that the municipality, "in adopting the scheme of taxation now under consideration and steadfastly adhering to it in the face of much opposition, has evinced a laudable public spirit and has acted in the true interests of the people and trade of Surat in a manner which deserves recognition of Government."[11] Several of the councillors were later rewarded with titles and other honors for their support of Lely during this critical period.

Outside the municipality, English-educated politicians manifested their commitment to progress by founding or participating in institutions designed to stimulate the development of their city. The most prominent of these were educational organizations. During the late nineteenth century, membership on managing committees of local schools was common for Surat's professional men. Such committees ran the affairs of such educational institutions as Raichand Dipchand Girls' School, Union High School, and Tapidas and Tulsidas Varajdas High School, often soliciting the necessary funds to run the institutions from local *sheths*. Perhaps the most ambitious enterprise in the city before World War I was the Sarvajanik Education Society, founded in 1912 by Chunilal Shah. Shah modeled the society after the Deccan Education Society, which had been founded by the Maharastrian nationalist Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and actively sought volunteer teachers, as had its Poona counterpart. The society managed several schools in the city and district, including a middle school for local girls and Sarvajanik College (later Maganlal Thakordas Balmukandas College). Prominent municipal councillors and other English-educated figures served on the board of directors from the beginning. Surti cotton merchants living in Bombay provided most of the funds.[12]

The Surat District Cooperative Union, begun in 1908, only four years after passage of the Cooperative Credit Societies Bill by the Imperial Legislative Council, also solidified the emerging elite's claims to civic leadership. As I. J. Catanach has shown, colonial administrators at the turn of the century were paying increasing attention to what they viewed as the stranglehold of rural moneylenders over the Indian peasant and sought to promote cooperative societies as alternative sources

of credit. The civil servants in charge of this effort in Bombay relied largely on Indian nonofficials to organize and develop societies in the districts. Often positions of leadership in cooperative organizations were assumed by ex-officers of the revenue department eager to launch political careers in their localities or to win imperial honors and other forms of government recognition.[13] In Surat the most important figures behind the cooperative movement were two retired government officials, Bamanji Modi and Khandubhai Desai. The former became chairman of the union, the latter its honorary manager. Within three years after the organization's founding in 1908, it controlled a network of thirty-eight societies in the district and had a working capital of about 200,000 rupees. This may have barely made a dent in the credit needs of the peasantry of South Gujarat, who as yet had developed little contact with the union's leaders. But those who led the organization demonstrated their concern with promoting the welfare of the rural population. Work for the Union won Modi a *Khan Bahadur*ship and Desai a *Rao Bahadur*ship.[14]

In becoming staunch advocates of progress, however, public leaders were not acting as lackeys of the British and their causes. Reforming zeal often was a rhetorical platform for launching challenges to existing policies and making claims to resources and rewards controlled by the government. English-educated politicians regularly questioned whether the colonial administration was living up to its avowed ideals of improvement in practice, asserting that they knew better how the public good could be served. Members of the press came to regard an aggressive—yet still loyal—criticism of government on these grounds as a solemn civic duty and frequently took the provincial administration to task for shortcomings in its modernizing efforts. In a 1901 article, the editors of *Gujarat Mitra* called for greater provincial support for Surat's municipality, arguing that the Bombay administration had "not hitherto done anything of special note to help the training of the population," and had a responsibility to support the local body which it could not deny.[15] Municipal addresses to visiting imperial dignitaries increasingly became occasions to press Surat's need for public funds. Sandwiched between statements of loyalty in a 1911 address to Sir George Clarke, governor of Bombay, were affirmations of the city's record in promoting reform and mild jabs at the provincial administration for its niggardliness in funding municipal schools:

> Government recognizes, by its grants in aid of education, that it [education] is a matter not of local but of imperial concern, and we claim a larger degree of sympathy and help in carrying out this work. While our expenditure has grown by leaps and bounds, and while we have been opening new schools, the grant given to us has remained stationary for

years. We claim increased assistance from Government, not that we may lighten our burden, but that we may increase and improve the educational facilities of the city.[16]

In confirming a commitment to improvement, educated politicians also asserted entitlement to greater political influence and public acknowledgment from the Raj. The announcement of the imperial honors lists invariably raised the ire of urban reformers who felt that their public work had not been sufficiently recognized. Journalists charged the administration with unfairness in failing to honor those men who had worked most diligently on municipalities and other civic organizations. The honors list of 1898 prompted them to complain: "Recognition of disinterested public service now includes members of Government and a few native chiefs and princes. It is these two classes that appear in usual numbers in the honours list from year to year. Those who silently work towards the good of the country at great personal sacrifice are seldom rewarded for their services."[17] An insistence that Surat's leaders had performed their civic duties well in the past was also essential to any call for greater self-governing privileges. Urging that the proportion of elective seats on the municipality be increased from one-half to two-thirds and that the council be given the right to choose its own president, the Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha asserted in 1889 that:

> Our city has made substantial progress and our citizens have been taking an ever increasing interest in Local Self-Government, and have shown sufficient qualifications and capacities for the same. . . . The capacities and qualifications of our citizens for local self-government have been officially recognized from time to time. . . . Our Municipality has earnestly tried their utmost to give a practical shape to several of the most costly but important sanitary improvements recently recommended by Government. . . . These circumstances, we humbly venture to submit, . . . make out a sufficiently strong case in favour of our city, entitling it to additional privileges.[18]

Such statements are evidence of the willingness of English-educated men to measure the government against its avowed commitment to progress and political education as they staked out the importance of their own civic roles. While holding the administration to principles inherent in the ideology of imperialism, they refined and made more resolute their self-images as leaders with a major contribution to make to their city and to the empire. The confirmation of civic identities and the upholding of public principle were thus inextricably tied to the political processes of contending for power, status, and funding within the Raj.

But even as they disputed colonial policy, the English-educated implicitly accepted an improving ethic that ran counter to the concerns of most city dwellers. Public discourse did not allow unequivocal expressions of opposition to the alien and often threatening municipal ideals. One might counter specific proposals by using a variety of rationales—costliness, interference with religious practice, or poor planning—but direct attacks on the larger ethic of improvement were absolutely inappropriate in civic politics. Arguments couched in the rhetoric of reform during this period also consistently stopped short of outright challenge to British rule. In raising doubts about specific policies, politicians rarely questioned the sincerity of government, only its wisdom in making specific decisions without consulting local "men of advanced views." The language of improvement during the late nineteenth century thus set severe limitations on the ability to conceive and express alternative political possibilities.

This is not to say that there was no indigenous component in the conception of reform. A number of high-caste concerns found a place in public culture, but they were now rationalized in the new idiom of progress. Some city leaders, for instance, actively promoted abstinence from alcohol consumption, in effect reinforcing the efforts of Hindu saints who had long emphasized the polluting character of alcohol. Members of the new elite, however, referred to temperance as part of a larger package of reforms designed to regenerate India, along with measures to stimulate industry, agriculture, and education, and organized public conferences and associations to this end.[19] Orphanage conferences and cow-protection societies certainly reflected Hindu fears that orphans might be converted to Christianity and traditional anxieties about the cow, but English-educated politicians presented these organizations as part of a larger effort to promote human welfare. The stated goals of an association founded in 1903 to protect the cattle of Gujarat were to improve the "backward state of agriculture" and the "depressed state of the peasantry," rationales that might have seemed quite odd to most city dwellers, who revered the cow.[20] Thus, advocacy of reform did not simply reflect the influence of imperial thinking; it sometimes indicated an attempt to build a system of meanings consonant with powerful and persistent Hindu and Jain values. The rhetoric employed in talking about such issues within the civic arena, however, had often been stripped of any evidence of this indigenous contribution.

THE POPULAR DIMENSION

The vocabulary of progress and reform was not the only scale along which members of the English-educated elite weighed government policy nor the only standard by which they shaped their roles in the city's

politics. Equally important to their developing identity was a sense of being spokesmen of the public or the people. During the course of their education they had read Locke, Mill, and Bentham, studied the English system of local self-government, and steeped themselves in the history of constitutional development. They found that presenting themselves as representatives of the people was a powerful means of approaching the ruling group, particularly when their objectives ran counter to the administration's. In projecting their own image of the shape of public opinion, they could at best hope to influence imperial policy and to gain recognition of their claims to authority, at worst to compel their rulers' attention and force the civil servants onto a rhetorical defensive.

What constituted the public, however, was very much contested. At the very least, the term suggested a collectivity of right-minded persons whose concerns were wider than those of narrow interest groups, castes, or religious groups and who were thus entitled to share in the rights and responsibilities of self-government. Beyond this point, the term could take on two divergent senses. For some, the public was a few men who, because of their education, held advanced views. For others, it was a much larger cross-section of society, such as the male taxpayers of the city (about twenty thousand in number). No one in Surat, however, suggested that the public meant anything as broad as the entire urban population; nontaxpayers and most women were always excluded. However the term was used, invoking public opinion suggested an exclusive claim to speak for the citizenry. Contending that one spoke for the people implied that one's rivals could not.

Representatives of public opinion generated their claims to embody the general will by running press campaigns, holding public meetings, and organizing public associations. In the petition campaign against the house tax mentioned earlier, Hardevram Haridas and his supporters used all three methods to suggest that public opinion opposed the measure, translating the deep resentments of urban dwellers into terms of political justice meaningful to the small number of foreign officers and judges with the power to overturn the municipality's decision. They organized public meetings in various municipal wards to demonstrate the depth of popular opposition and to collect large numbers of signatures on petitions to be sent to Bombay. A letter from a "public meeting of the inhabitants of Gopipura Ward" asserted that "the public of Surat have in unmistakable terms protested against this measure" and suggested that the municipality "should retreat with honour, [and] regain the confidence of the people which they have lost and pacify people in a right liberal manner."[21] Those who sponsored and supported the tax, they charged, were trying "to dishonour the tradition of the British Rule by disregarding vox populi."[22] Local newspapers stressed the

same themes. *Native Opinion* stated that "when we find the inhabitants of all the twelve different wards assembling in constitutional meetings, one after another, and condemning the measure in most unequivocal terms, coupled with three thousand and odd written objections—some of them very learned and elaborate—sent to the municipality, none should venture to say that the feeling . . . is not genuine."[23] The *Gujarat Mitra* insisted that the government and municipality were forcing the issue on the citizenry, which knew its own interests best: "If our people are able to pay rates, they will willingly accept all municipal services which conduce to the betterment of their health. If they are unable to do so, it will be cruel kindness to force water and drainage works quite of European magnificence on them."[24]

Though the movement eventually failed, skillful use of the idiom of public politics clearly discomfitted the defenders of the house tax, who found themselves forced to refute their opponents' contentions in the same language. Frederick Lely repeatedly argued in his memos that the struggle's leaders showed a lamentable lack of civic spirit.[25] In 1899 he wrote, "My six years' experience of the Surat Municipality was a continuous battle with a small set of men whose one conception of *public duty* was to block everything *progressive* by some verbal impediment in the law" (emphasis added).[26] Here, obviously, were attempts to undercut the assertions of the movement's leaders by calling on the reformist dimension of public leadership. But he also attempted to deflate the representativeness of the petition and press campaigns. Lely wrote to the government of Bombay in 1892 and 1893 that the agitation was "more or less fictitious"[27] and that a large number of signatures were "got up" in a series of public meetings by one person (Hardevram Haridas).[28] In other letters he charged that all but several hundred of the 6,300 petitions submitted were in the handwriting of a few individuals.[29] Another British civil servant asserted that "the proposals have been supported by a large majority of the [municipal] Commissioners, and it is reasonable to suppose that this majority represents the more enlightened and influential portion of the ratepayers."[30]

Much of the debate over the house tax thus came down to a battle over what it meant to be a leader of the public and who the public actually were. Both parties implicitly agreed that the term represented the ultimate source of legitimacy, yet its precise definition was up for grabs. Different understandings could be evoked for different ends. While the notion of the public was certainly drawn from outside India, it was given meaning in the context of everyday political struggles at the local level.

Lely's claims notwithstanding, the house tax was clearly an issue that engaged the feelings of numerous property owners, both small and

large, in the city. In most cases, however, English-educated politicians claimed to represent the people even when the larger population clearly was not concerned. Most Surtis identified themselves primarily with families, neighborhoods, or descent-based groupings, not as constituents of wards whose boundaries had been drawn by the municipality or as members of a undifferentiated public. Perceived assaults on familial reputations or community integrity raised popular ire—not the notion that government had failed to consult the will of the people. More often than not, public meetings were channels used by members of the small elite in pursuing their own concerns and those of their magnate patrons in very specific contexts. Views expressed at such gatherings hardly represented a cross-section of city dwellers. Many were in fact prearranged rites orchestrated by their organizers to draft a petition to the government or the municipality. Each resolution would be moved and seconded, backed by short speeches, then approved unanimously. Speakers had been chosen in advance, and dissenters rarely appeared to express their opinions. When rival factions in the city disagreed on some matter, they generally organized their own separate meetings of the public. The rules of procedure from one meeting suggest that opposing views were not tolerated:

1. That no one except those set down as movers, seconders and supporters of the proposition will be allowed to address the meeting except with permission of the Chair previously obtained in writing.
2. That no one will be allowed to move an amendment to the proposition unless it is put down in writing, and duly seconded and is permitted by the Chair. But no amendment will be permitted to be moved which is subversive of the principle involved in the same.
3. That the ruling of the Chair must be implicitly obeyed.
4. That those who will not abide by the rulings of the Chair will be on the first instance, requested to resume their seats, if they become recalcitrant they will be requested to leave the meetings, if they persist in disobeying the Chair they will be removed from the meeting.[31]

Thus, discussion and debate, which were extremely important in the theory of Western liberal democracy, found little place in public meetings in Surat. Local actors established their own procedures for identifying public opinion, but these procedures actively prevented opening public life to the underclasses of Surat, who in any case were undoubtedly perplexed by the strange rituals of nominating chairs, proposing and seconding propositions, shouting "shame" or "hear, hear" in response to speakers' arguments, and voting for resolutions that arose in these meetings. The control exercised over public meetings by a small number of men gave limited scope for the percolation into civic politics of ideas, causes, and vocabulary from below.

Public associations also failed to take up the grievances of the city's diverse peoples. Instead they were a medium employed by English-educated politicians to address the administration. Many were ephemeral entities organized to petition the government on a specific issue. In 1909, for example, a Ratepayers' Association formed to urge the government to extend the municipal franchise simply disappeared from Surat after its campaign failed.[32] The three most important associations in Surat before World War I were the Praja Samaj (People's Society) of the early 1870s, the Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha (Society for the Advancement of the People's Welfare) of the 1880s, and the Surat District Association, which formed in 1908. The first two revolved largely around the personalities of Durgaram Mehta and Ukabhai Prabhudas, respectively. Both organizations enjoyed a brief flurry of activity but died out after a few years.[33]

In comparison to these two bodies, the Surat District Association enjoyed a rather healthy existence. Organized by local "moderate" members of the Indian National Congress, its president was Khandubhai Desai, honorary organizer of the Surat District Cooperative Union. In 1909, near the peak of its activity, it had sixty-one members. Of these, twenty-eight were in the educated professions, twenty-five were businessmen, and five were landholders. Though artisans were the largest occupational bloc in the population of the city, only one participant was listed as a "weaving master." Most of the members were Jains or high-caste Hindus. There were also eight Parsis but only two Muslims, both Daudi Bohra traders.[34] The leaders of the association were English-educated men. For the most part, the association's concerns were of relevance only to the educated politicians and their patrons. Municipal matters, particularly questions of self-governing powers, overwhelmingly dominated its affairs. In 1909, the organization engaged in frenzied opposition to the proposal to extend the municipal franchise. But after the franchise battle, it fell into a semimoribund state. It was revived periodically to take up specific local body and imperial issues, though it never produced sustained political activity or gained significant popular support. At no time did the association have regular workers to take up daily affairs or regular methods for collecting funds.

The *Gujarat Mitra* repeatedly lamented the short lifespan of public activities in the city by quoting the adage "Surtis are bold at the beginning, but later their enthusiasm wanes."[35] But the editors missed the major reason for the spasmodic character of public life: public meetings and associations were to a great extent channels utilized by the tiny elite of English-educated professionals in approaching the government, but they had little relevance to the majority of Surtis, who conducted their day-to-day politics in idioms that were almost completely distinct.

Rather than conceiving of public leaders as their representatives, ordinary residents of the city more likely viewed the educated politician as a sort of ritual specialist able to master the special ceremonies needed to manage the colonizers or as a patron who provided his clients with certain essential services. The new politicians had adapted British traditions of political organization to establish the legitimacy of their actions and roles. They felt little need to bring the larger population of the city into the new arena of politics that they were creating. The public of Surat thus remained a very limited group of persons, and public politics remained confined to a very few issues.

THE NATIONAL DIMENSION

Like advocacy of reform and representation of the people, identification with the Indian nation constituted a claim to acceptability in British terms. As we have seen, the colonial rulers viewed their "nationhood" as a special marker of their advanced level of development as a people. They regarded the fact that the people of South Asia did not identify with the entity they had created—India—as a sign of cultural inferiority, as evidence in fact that continued colonial rule was necessary. Even Britishers sympathetic to the quest of educated South Asians for greater political rights, such as Alexander Octavian Hume, shared the assumption that self-governing responsibilities could come only as Indians forged a national identity. In imagining themselves to be part of a common community along with other peoples who shared their common subjection to British rule in South Asia, elite figures in Surat sought to subvert colonial judgments that denied them full personhood and to gain access to the political privileges and influence to which those that had reached a relatively high stage of consciousness were theoretically entitled.[36] In short, the effort to forge a solidarity with other South Asians was heavily conditioned by a colonial discourse that privileged those possessing a national identity against those who did not.

Throughout the once-colonized world, the notion of nationalism today unambiguously connotes not only an identification with the nation but also the desire for independence from foreign domination. But in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Surat, nationalism by no means always precluded loyalty to the British Empire. All members of the English-educated elite attended and participated in imperial ceremonies, occasions that required public expressions of loyalty. Some participated in organizations committed to cementing the bond between the Indian nation and the British Empire. In the early twentieth century Rao Bahadur Lallubhai Pranvallabhdas Parekh founded a counter organization to the Indian National Congress, the National Indian Association,

whose avowed purpose, according to its members, was to increase understanding between Indians and Englishmen. In one typical meeting, members of the association gave lectures on the benefits of the British Empire and passed resolutions to promote reform and greater cooperation with the rulers. To modern observers, such an institution smacks of sycophancy, yet its members no doubt conceived of themselves as nation builders, regarding close cooperation with the empire as the best way of promoting their country's development. They did help foster a sense of Indianness in the city, albeit within a very narrow elite group.[37]

Involvement in the Indian National Congress was somewhat limited before 1905, although a number of Surtis participated in the organization from its inception. During the late 1880s the Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha chose delegates to the Congress, including several municipal councillors.[38] A few local journalists maintained a regular association with the national body. In addition to attending annual meetings of the nationalist organization, they organized addresses for visiting Congress leaders, such as those honoring Dadabhai Naoroji, Alexander Octavian Hume, and Pherozeshah Mehta.[39] The politicians of Bombay and Poona tended to view Surat as a backwater of Congress activity, and few people with positions of prominence in civic politics were willing to risk the displeasure of English civil servants by taking a stridently activist role in the affairs of the national organization.

After 1905, however, the local scene changed dramatically. Suddenly almost all participants in Surat's new civic life chose to align themselves with the Congress. In anticipation of the Morley-Minto reforms, which would give municipalities a stronger voice in choosing members of the provincial legislature, Congress moderates from Bombay, such as Pherozeshah Mehta, began to pursue close ties with Surat's city councillors more vigorously.[40] Then the city received the honor of being host to the sessions of the 1906 Bombay Provincial Congress and the 1907 meetings of the Indian National Congress itself. The Surat District Association was founded as a branch of the Congress about the time of the historic Surat meetings, partly as an attempt to restrain a small group of "extremists" aligned with Lokamanya Tilak that had just emerged in the city, partly out of a concern with influencing the shape of reform initiatives from the center. Stimulated by the example of the antipartition movement in Bengal, several local leaders also tried to encourage the development of *swadeshi* (native) industries in the city. By the onset of World War I, nationalism, Congress membership, and public leadership had become inextricably bound together.[41] But it generally came without a larger questioning of adherence to empire. To be a member of the new elite meant to be both loyal to the British

and imbued with national pride, supportive of imperial intentions to reform Indian society and critical of government policies on behalf of a people who seemingly disapproved of the agenda of improvement.

THE ENGLISH-EDUCATED AND COMPETING URBAN LEADERSHIPS

As the idiom of public politics assumed central significance in elite self-representations to the colonial rulers, it became an increasingly important ground of contention between rival political figures. While striving for political recognition, English-educated men constantly sought to establish their claims to authority against others. In this process, they sharpened their moral notions and refined their self-conception as public leaders.

Collectively urban professionals acquired positions in the local political system at the expense of the natural leaders. As early as the 1880s, English-educated men began to challenge the right of the notables to enjoy privileged access to the ruling group. As their self-confidence grew, their assaults on notable authority intensified. Appealing to British historical theories that suggest a universal tendency for societies to move from social stages in which leadership was based upon hereditary qualities to those in which it was founded upon public capabilities, members of the emergent elite began to attack the notion that any individual was "naturally" entitled to local ascendancy. Each of the dimensions of public leadership—the reformist, the popular, and the national—was invoked in this challenge.

The English-educated politicians believed, first of all, that their interest in the common welfare and their diligence in promoting reform entitled them to special consideration in official circles. In their outlook, they represented the enlightened sections of society who were laying the foundations of self-government in the city. They objected that men they regarded as backward, superstitious, and unproductive often held more influence with the rulers than themselves. Articles in the *Gujarat Mitra* frequently condemned specific notables for lack of public spirit. They lashed out at Hindu *sheths* for wasteful expenditures on caste feasts and religious festivals.[42] They ridiculed the Modis, the city's leading Parsi family, for their claims to descent from ancient Persian kings.[43] They challenged the old Mughal gentry for its ostentatious ways of life, encouragement of religious "fanaticism," and lack of concern with the welfare of the ordinary Muslim.

Similar attacks were made on the patriotism of the notables. Local journalists questioned the natural leaders for sycophancy in their relations to the British and for their hesitancy in supporting affairs of the

Indian National Congress. In 1893, the editor of *Gujarat Mitra*, suggesting that nationalism and public spiritedness were inescapably linked, bitterly criticized the notables for nonattendance at the presentation of an address to Alexander Hume: "The Rao Bahadurs and Khan Bahadurs, our Rao Sahebs and Khan Sahebs, our Raises [notables] and shetias and all our titled heads and the so-called leaders of society showed their appreciation for the public good as represented by the meeting, by their strange and unaccountable absence."[44]

While challenges to notable power frequently took place along the reformist and nationalist dimensions of public leadership, it was the question of who should act as spokesman for the people that proved to be the most critical battleground. In the late nineteenth century, a trio of notables, usually the heads of the Edrus (or Nawab of Surat), the Modi, and Nagarsheth families, each acting as representative of his religious community, had controlled the right to call all public meetings on the basis of hereditary authority. In the first decade of the twentieth century, English-educated men began to question "the monopoly of the three signatures," both in the press and in the streets. Public meetings held on such diverse issues as the situation of Indians in South Africa, the death of the Parsi leader Jamshedji Jijibhai, and the building of an overbridge at the railway station provided opportunities to strike out at the prevailing practice. The Surat District Association issued a direct challenge in January 1909, when it called its own meeting, in opposition to that called by several notables, to discuss the Morley-Minto reforms. The *Gujarat Mitra* passionately defended the action:

> Such a laughable and lamentable custom as having public meetings called only upon the signatures of certain individuals does not exist anywhere, and in times like this, those who assert such autocratic claims invite criticism and unfavorable comment. We are happy to see that such a leading citizen of the city . . . as Zain el-Edrus has shown proper understanding of the issue. By participating in the public meeting called by the secretaries of the District Association he has demonstrated that the right to call public meetings does not belong to certain individuals but to public bodies, leading householders of the various communities and all alike . . . . In the future, the tyranny of the three signatures will come to an end, people will be happy with the practice of collectively calling public meetings for public business and there will be no occasions for raising such divisive criticisms.[45]

In challenging the notability, members of the English-educated elite eventually were able to capture the ethical high ground as interpreted by the colonial rulers. In 1888 the district collector had dismissed the Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha, the city's leading public association at the time, as an unrepresentative "coterie of Vakils and schoolboys." "The

more influential townspeople [i.e., the notables]," he insisted, "laugh at it."[46] By the early twentieth century, however, the British regularly consulted and listened to men from the Surat District Association and other public organizations. In part the success of the urban professionals lay in their ability to wear down their rulers through their constant appeal to British logic and in their capacity for exposing the contradictions in the notables' various political roles. After all, colonial thinking regarded aristocratic leaderships as reflecting an earlier (and therefore more backward) stage in the march of political progress. Given the moral hierarchy explicit in the linear conception of history, political aspirants who could mount claims to embody forms of representation further along the evolutionary scale were in an excellent position to oust those who clung to the theory of natural leadership. As the new politicians developed a reputation for commitment to urban improvement through their participation in public institutions such as the municipality, civil servants found it increasingly difficult to deny them an important collaborative role in the empire. Just before the war, the government expanded the number of elective positions on the municipality to give greater scope in decision making to the urban professionals. The collector altered the form of the annual durbar as well, allowing representatives of the public to raise questions about policy.[47]

The notables were ill-equipped to defend themselves against the rhetorical onslaught of the new public leaders. Prominent Hindu and Jain *sheths* slowly withdrew from direct contacts with colonial officials. Parsi, Muslim, and Bohra notables, by contrast, began to cast themselves as defenders of minority communities threatened by the Hindu majority, discarding in part claims based upon the hereditary qualities of their families.

As the natural leaders gradually lost their lines of approach to the government, struggles between contending factions of urban professionals assumed greater significance. New claimants for power arose continually from the ranks of the English-educated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, threatening the position of those who had already established themselves as brokers. Conflicts developed between "in" and "out" groups, with members of each faction often drawing upon the same vocabulary and discursive principles. While attempting to convince the colonial elite of the legitimacy of their positions compared with their opponents', members of each contending party strengthened their identities as public leaders.

A single, especially well-documented case provides an excellent example of how conflicts between segments of the English-educated elite could lead to consensus in the vocabulary of political claims in Surat. Around the time of the Indian National Congress meetings of 1907,

followers of the Maharashtrian leader Tilak emerged in the city, led by a young lawyer, Dahyabhai Desai. These individuals, called extremists by their opponents, differed little from "moderates" such as Chandrashankar Bhimanand, Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta, and Chunilal Gandhi in caste or educational background, though they tended to be younger men who had not yet achieved the same success in their careers or attained the same influence in public institutions like the Surat District Association or the municipality. They were highly influenced by developments taking place in the larger nation in the years immediately before this: the arrogant posture of Lord Curzon toward Indian nationalism, the antipartition movement in Bengal and its call for the boycott of British goods, and the campaigns of Tilak in Bombay and Poona. The most obvious ground of their conflict with the moderates was the issue of who best represented the nation, a question that assumed special significance once Surat had been fixed as the site of the 1907 Congress sessions. In the months leading up to the meetings, both moderates and extremists sponsored talks by prominent Congress leaders in attempts to capture local support for their national programs. M. M. Rayaji, an extremist leader, founded a newspaper in the city, *Shakti,* from which he launched sharp attacks on both government and the moderates. His newspaper apparently drew upon the rhetoric of Bengali and Maharashtrian nationalism in its columns, but unfortunately no copies of the paper seem to have survived.

Evidence of the language surrounding more local issues, however, is available. When the government announced in 1909 that it would consider making changes in the municipal constitution, the extremists issued a challenge to the moderates, arguing that the franchise requirement should be lowered from 9 rupees to 4 rupees tax per year (thus increasing the number of voters from about five thousand to about ten thousand) and that the general ward, in which only government servants and other well-educated people could vote, should be eliminated. A question of self-interest was at stake: significant reform of the franchise would perhaps allow the Desai-led group to win a larger number of seats on the council. The moderates, on the other hand, feared that they might lose their dominant position among elected councillors if the changes took effect.

The battle between the two factions centered not only on the spoils of office but also on which group could rightfully claim urban leadership. In pressing its case, each held public meetings and organized public associations to convince the government of the depth of feeling on its side. Members of the Bhimanand faction claimed to be public leaders because they represented a broad group of the "respectable" men of the city;[48] the Desai group emphasized crowd size, insisting that

fifteen hundred citizens had attended one of their meetings in favor of franchise reform, far more than were present at their opponents' gatherings.[49] Each attempted to persuade the civil administration that its rival was a narrow interest group rather than true leaders of the public. Bhimanand and his supporters charged that the "extremists" were "trying to earn cheap popularity by mixing questions of octroi and General Ward for purposes of their own" and that attendance figures at extremist meetings were inflated:

> An idea will be easily formed as to how far these people could be said to have represented the public at large and still less the voters of the General Ward, whose interest is at stake. In this meeting of the 8th of August, one of the extremists presided. The legitimate attendance was very poor and meager. As it was an evening of Adhik Shravan, a religious month when Hindus flock out in large numbers for offering homage to the idols in the temples . . . they [the worshipers] were attracted to join the crowd to witness the meeting. No respectable gentry accepted their invitation and attended the meeting. If they had it at any other place there would have been an audience of hardly 50 persons at the most, and that, too, of those drawn from these few discontented grain dealers and retail cloth merchants [who objected to new *octroi* duties on their trades] and those few extremists.[50]

The extremists, on the other hand, charged that those who opposed the constitutional changes were a small, self-interested coterie:

> They are . . . a few Municipal Councillors (who naturally think that the increase in number of voters means increased danger to their seats as well as greater trouble and worry to get them) backed up by some of their private friends and passed as independent movements of different public bodies. The general public is very keen on this point and strongly resents the conduct of these councillors who have, in doing what they have done . . . acted against ordinary principles of public morality and have misused the trust put in them by their electors. . . . They are not in accordance with the opinions of the public of Surat or any considerable portion of it.[51]

Underlying these attacks, of course, were differing constructions of the public. For the moderates the "respectable" character of those in attendance was no less important than the size of the audience. In the extremist position, on the other hand, numbers were the chief determinant of representativeness.

Both factions also invoked the reformist dimension of public leadership. The moderates stressed that representatives of the general ward had been among the most progressive commissioners, playing the role of "the instructed few"—that is, an enlightened group of citizens with

an especially strong commitment to the interest of their city—and they quoted John Stuart Mill that such leadership was necessary to the process of educating an unschooled populace in self-government.[52] The extremists charged that the general ward had inhibited the development of the city, creating "vexatious divisions among the voters" and giving "undue representation to particular sections of the inhabitants who had less interest in the city than other people."[53] They further insisted that the purpose of political education was best served by extending the responsibilities of voting to larger numbers of people.

The British and Indian civil servants who ultimately decided the fate of the municipal franchise question could not ignore the rationale used by either party. The colonial rulers themselves were implicated in their own rhetoric and had to frame their own judgments of right and wrong in the same language of public politics. Available records suggest that it was not an easy decision for the ruling group to make, in part because the notion of public leadership was ambiguous and changing, in part because no mechanism was in place to determine what the larger population of Surat, who had no real voice in civic politics, really thought. After receiving the petitions, the district collector wrote his superiors that the citizens seemed to be generally against retention of the general ward (thus resorting to the concept's popular dimension). But he also noted that the councillors "who have sat on the general ward have on the average stood above the rest of the councillors for activity and ability" (thus invoking the reformist dimension).[54] He recommended a compromise solution: that the franchise be expanded but that the general ward remain intact. Higher-level officials, swayed more completely by the moderates' arguments, decided that neither change should be made since the representatives of the urban population—that is, the current municipal councillors—had overwhelmingly rejected the franchise measures. The interesting point about this decision-making process is that members of the ruling group felt compelled by the rhetoric of both sides to assess who had the better claim to public leadership; notions of natural leadership were entirely left out of discussion. Thus, as Surti politicians began to employ public discourse more exclusively, the colonial rulers were compelled to follow suit. In effect, the English-educated men had redefined the ground on which local political battles could be fought.

Looked at from another perspective, however, it was the contending Indian factions who had made the greater concessions. Implicit in the rhetoric of both sides were assumptions ultimately derived from the alien language of public politics. All parties agreed that the "public" of Surat needed to be "represented" by an elite with special training and a special civic commitment. Each set of actors accepted the evolutionary theory of societal development. Beyond question in this debate was the

notion that Indian cities should be judged by a linear model of history in which Britain was portrayed as having reached the pinnacle of development. The conflict centered mainly on where at that particular moment Surat was along the line of progress, that is, on the extent to which a genuine public leadership and a real public opinion had developed locally. While the political rivals disagreed about the degree of progress Surat had made, they all accepted that Indians were behind the British and that only the colonial rulers could legitimately make the ultimate determination about what kind of representation Surtis should have. Through the act of petitioning the government, extremist and moderate alike acknowledged their subordination to the Raj. The dispute was thus essentially confined to a ground that did not challenge the authority of the men who ruled India or the ultimate principles on which this rule was based.

The struggle over the municipal franchise exemplified the extent to which the idiom of public politics had gained ascendancy in the politics of the city. Both sides in this conflict employed essentially the same terms and the same principles of argumentation, though each interpreted these terms and principles in its own way. By the beginning of World War I, the three dimensions of public leadership had become the orthodox standards by which claims to authority in the city were generated and assessed.

Thus, by the early twentieth century, those in Surat with an English-language education had transformed themselves into a relatively coherent elite with a common vocabulary for assessing their political role. Members of this elite had fashioned their identities in terms meaningful to the British and Indian civil servants they wished to influence. In shaping their place in the urban polity, however, they had not simply bought an alien value system wholesale; they interpreted the meanings of key words such as *public, the people,* and *political education* in accordance with preexisting cultural sentiments, with their concerns in particular political conflicts, and perhaps with their own idiosyncratic understandings of borrowed terms and theories. Out of this process developed a public culture that was British in form but to which Surtis had given much substance.

THE ENGLISH-EDUCATED ELITE AND SURTI SOCIETY

While English-educated politicians were able to expand their roles as intermediaries between colonial authorities and residents of the city, they had by no means achieved positions of domination in their own society. The arena of public politics in which they moved was still an extremely narrow one. Educational organizations and cooperative soci-

eties managed limited resources compared with the vast capital controlled by the city's *sheths*. Public meetings and public associations were usually confined to small numbers of elite individuals. The development of a metropolitan economy had not seriously disturbed the urban social structure since residents had re-created previous patterns of economic relations in adapting to the changing circumstances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Elsewhere in Surti society, older forms of leadership and social organization had reproduced themselves. Outside the elite, few residents considered themselves part of an undifferentiated urban citizenry committed to participate in the life of public associations; few made their political judgments based upon considerations of the public good. To reach the larger body of city dwellers, the English-educated politicians employed a political idiom distinct from that they used in the civic arena.

The precise contours of this second idiom are difficult to discern since it was so rarely recorded in documents. The language of public politics often demanded encoded form—petitions, resolutions, editorials, and the records of legal proceedings. This was not true, however, of the new politicians' symbolic actions outside the civic sphere; in fact success in public politics may have required that they prevent these actions, so often based upon values contradictory to public principle, from entering into the written record. Yet two features of this idiom do emerge in existing sources: it implicitly recognized the status of the commercial *sheths* as leaders of the Brahman-Vaniya community, and it stressed the importance of bonds of "affection"—caste, kinship, friendship, and patron-client ties.

For the most part, urban professionals did not threaten the position of magnates in the inner arenas of Surti politics, only their roles as intermediaries between local society and the British. The new politicians generally discovered that maintaining their power required accommodation to preexisting leaderships in the city, the most important of whom were Hindu and Jain *sheths*. The faction led by Dahyabhai Desai discussed in the previous section—the extremists—acquired a following in the city largely by acting as advocates of grain and cloth merchants, who were upset at the imposition of new town duties on food and piece-goods imports. Desai's followers and the traders formed a Grain and Cloth Merchants' Association to pressure the municipality into reconsidering its *octroi* policy. Inside the skeleton of the association, however, indigenous forms of organization persisted. The two groups of traders essentially coincided with their occupational *mahajans*, each led by its own headmen. The Mahajan Sheth, acknowledged leader of the Hindu Vaniyas in Surat, chaired assemblies of the merchants when they came together to discuss their grievances.[55] Nothing in the available evidence suggests that the extremists attempted to usurp the func-

tions of the mercantile leaderships in the traders' organizations; instead, they seem to have recognized that the strength of their movement depended on the prominent place of the *sheths*. Desai and his colleagues furnished not internal leadership but a knowledge of municipal laws and rhetorical skills lacked by the commercial magnates. On one occasion in 1909, when the traders came before the collector to appeal their case without their educated allies, they failed to be even remotely persuasive. The *Gujarat Mitra* commented snidely at the time: "The discussion on this subject lacked naturally the strength of facts and figures, coming as it did from a section of the people not enlightened enough to argue logically."[56]

When elections approached, candidates for municipal office conducted their campaigns through highly personalized networks, often headed by *sheths* and other important local figures, rather than resort to pamphleteering and public speeches. Before elections, candidates regularly visited voters in their homes, careful to employ terms of deference such as "Bhai Saheb" or "Sheth Saheb."[57] On the day of the election, the candidate or his agent often escorted voters to the polls in his own horse carriage. Because of the limited franchise requirements, canvassing and campaigning on such an intimate basis was quite simple. The percentage of the population allowed voting privileges grew only from 2 percent in the 1880s to a little more than 5 percent before World War I;[58] a typical ward thus contained fewer than four hundred voters. Since the most important qualifications for voting were property assessments and tax payments to the municipality, most of this electorate was of high status and relatively well-to-do.[59] Even so, only a small percentage of those qualified to vote did so, since most ward elections had been prearranged by influential figures in the ward before the polling day. In reality few seats were genuinely contested. Election figures of 1895 are fairly typical in this respect.[60]

Ward	Vote Total of Winner	Vote Total of Second Candidate
1	68	Unopposed
2	83	Withdrew
3	74	8
4	42	Unopposed
5	83	Unopposed
6	91	Unopposed
7	77	Retired after 61 votes
8	128	Retired after 8 votes
9	15	Unopposed
10	155	34
11	64	Withdrew
12	7	Unopposed

Even when real contests developed, candidates relied heavily on election agents, usually men of considerable stature within the ward. Unsuccessful candidates in some cases later complained that powerful local men had canvassed for their opponents, exercising personal influence and neighborhood ties to sway voters.[61] One aspirant for municipal office in 1885 charged that his rival had even relied on a high-ranking government employee as his agent and that this person had invited some voters to his home to ask for votes and visited others house-to-house.[62] Some councillors developed relations with particular magnates that persisted from election to election. The Chokhawala family, substantial grain merchants of Navapura, acted as agents for the extremist lawyer Kasanji Kunvarji Desai on a number of occasions, eventually contributing to his success in the council elections of 1914.[63]

Besides relying on acknowledged neighborhood leaders, the English-educated used a variety of techniques grounded in indigenous principle to gain support. Some styled themselves as *sheths*, serving as patrons of constituents and helping out friends and relatives. Others became involved in temple building or other charitable activities accepted within their constituencies as meritorious.[64] Competitors for elections regularly drew upon kin and caste ties in achieving election victories[65] or "private friends" in organizing ostensibly public movements,[66] as their opponents were always eager to point out to the ruling group but rarely willing to acknowledge in their own activities. British complaints about corruption on the part of some councillors may suggest that primary relations and group memberships often overrode public commitments or at least that local leaders saw no conflict between the two sets of loyalties.[67] Most public figures grounded their politics in two distinct idioms, one largely of civic politics and the other primarily of the inner arena of high-caste society.[68]

In dealing with the tight-knit communities of artisans and petty traders, councillors and English-educated politicians relied upon the headmen of the castes and other neighborhood leaders. When plague was suspected among the Ghanchis during the late 1890s, the municipality sent a lawyer to meet the *patels* of the community. The headmen were persuaded to fine all those who hid cases of the disease, much as they might have done if they had been enforcing the groups' own moral codes.[69] When the municipality resolved to renovate large sections of Navapura Golwad to improve sanitary conditions in 1904, it carried on negotiations with the Gola headmen through Naginchand Jhaverchand.[70] Developing a constituency in these areas of the city clearly involved cultivating ties with preexisting leaders rather than directly generating one's own following. Here again, the civic elite had to adapt itself to the realities of local social organization and indigenous

cultural meanings rather than employ the largely alien system of public discourse.

From the perspective of the city's underclass groups, the emerging public culture was one that gave them little voice. In effect, the rise of a representative political system in Surat kept most residents at arm's length from civic politics, since entry into this arena required specialized linguistic capabilities. Constitutional advance was driven by the continuous bargaining of elites with the colonizers rather than by popular demands for political "rights" and "freedoms." Effective elite control over expression in meetings and associations limited the diffusion of civic discourse deeper into Surti society, choking any potential for the emergence of a plebeian public sphere. Subaltern resistance of course continued in the form of tax avoidance, noncompliance with municipal regulation, and "corruption," activities which were often effective in checking state demands but which did not contribute to the shaping of formal political structure. Within a civic order increasingly based upon liberal principle, most urban groups found themselves powerless except insofar as they aligned themselves with spokesmen who had mastered English and the idioms of public discussion and debate. The development and reproduction of vertical networks of patronage was an almost inevitable result. Thus the factional alignments of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian politics were no mere carryover from traditional Indian social structures; they were a product of a state system where a tiny group of educated figures monopolized the critical symbolic skills needed to approach alien rulers.

CONCLUSION

Despite a general shift in elite political styles from the deferential to the contentious, the politics of Surat during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remained within the framework of a colonially constructed hegemony. Public leaders fought their battles in the civic domain within limits set, however unconsciously, by a discourse appropriated from the colonizers. The underclasses gave meaning to their politics, even to resistance against colonial objectives, in principles located largely outside this discourse but did not muster alternative conceptions of the larger polity capable of informing a conscious rejection of the political order. The distance between the inner and outer arenas of local politics was mediated by the few English-educated politicians capable of expressing themselves in multiple political idioms. Their bilingual approach promoted a politics of factionalism that constrained the capacity of residents to confront the domination of either the colonial rulers or the emerging elite.

The equilibrium which had been achieved at the onset of World War I was, however, a very shaky one. Conflicting tensions were present that could undermine the tentative stability. On the one hand, the idiom of public politics eventually created a need on the part of urban leaders to reach out to wider and wider constituencies. In order to substantiate claims to represent public opinion, a politician had to be able to point to a group of persons who clearly backed his position, and new aspirants to power thus needed to tap the emotions and dissatisfactions of local residents to be successful. On the other hand, the pressure for urban reform continued to be a source of danger to merchant and artisan life and culture. If for some reason the civil servants decided to pursue progress more resolutely, the underclasses might aggressively seek new leaders capable of taking on the Raj. During and immediately after the war years, both processes began to accelerate. Many older politicians, unable to adjust their political styles, were suddenly rendered obsolete by the rising new figures who claimed to represent the people better. But whether these competitors could themselves break outside the confines of public discourse was another question.

NINE

World War I and the Crisis in Urban Authority

At the beginning of World War I most residents of Surat would have considered the civic arena far less significant than the internal politics of their communities. True, the majority of householders in the city paid taxes to the municipality and the province and were affected in some way or other by intrusive council bylaws and government regulation. A few even obtained employment from the local body. But the activities of the government, the municipality, and voluntary associations had not become so extensive as to propel most Surtis into public politics on a sustained basis. The civic arena and its discourse remained largely the domain of a small, English-educated elite and, to a lesser extent, of various urban notables. Through participation on municipal committees and other public institutions, these elite figures cushioned the impact of colonial reform for the rest of the population, making possible the preservation of some autonomy in the inner arenas of local life. At times when government measures appeared to threaten their integrity or their pocketbooks, residents temporarily aligned themselves with the new politicians in protest. For the most part, however, Surtis continued to focus their attention on the moral communities where their livelihoods were determined and their identities and reputations forged.

World War I went far toward altering this situation. Though the war took place thousands of miles away and few residents participated in its battles, the conflict in Europe greatly affected local society. The imperatives of the war effort and the wartime sense of urgency led the Raj to adopt measures—at both the provincial and municipal levels—that disrupted areas of local life residents of the city and their leaders had previously reserved to themselves. The inability of local leaderships to defend their communities against a series of wartime problems produced a crisis of authority in the inner domain of politics. Notables unwilling

to loosen their bonds with British officials now found those ties more a liability than an advantage. Given the collapse of many older leaderships and the growing intrusion of government into local social practice, it became increasingly necessary that Surtis attach themselves to those in the civic arena able to place immediate pressure upon the Raj.

As a result of wartime conditions, a faction within the English-educated elite was able to gain effective control of the most important civic institutions in Surat. More militant than their predecessors, the members of this faction—all of whom belonged to the All-India Home Rule League—gave local shape to an aggressive movement against colonial policies. Appealing to householders' general sense of dissatisfaction during a period of crisis, the home rulers captured positions of power in the municipality and Surat District Association.

Despite these achievements, however, the home rulers were, by their own criteria, unsuccessful. They hoped to develop sustained popular followings in the city and to impart to local residents a political education—that is, an understanding of and experience in public politics. Yet during the war years, direct participation in municipal affairs, public associations, and other forms of public life expanded only slowly. To a great extent, the failures of the league can be attributed to an inability to conceive of political alternatives that stemmed from the very language of its political actions. The home rulers stayed largely within the old discourse of civic politics. They asserted their authority primarily along the three yardsticks of public leadership used by their predecessors in the civic arena and employed rhetoric steeped in the evolutionary assumptions of British liberalism. They remained attached to a constitutional framework to which most local residents had shown only limited commitment. So while the home rulers were effective in forcing the colonial rulers and their factional opponents into more defensive postures, they proved unable to address local concerns in terms meaningful or inspiring to the Surtis. Few residents outside the civic elite found the home rule appeal sufficiently compelling to enter the public sphere and challenge the colonial government in a sustained fashion.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

For Surat at least, the crisis of World War I began at its very outset. News of the outbreak of conflict in Europe immediately created an atmosphere of panic among local traders. Sources of credit quickly dried up in the city, bringing commerce to a virtual standstill.[1] All three banks financed by local capital went bankrupt.[2] The *sharafs*, who had always provided the bulk of local credit needs, became reluctant to lend money at any rate. As a result of the general unavailability of credit,

traders in cotton and grain were unable to make their purchases, causing exports of agricultural produce from the region to come to an abrupt halt.[3] All three of Surat's mills went into liquidation.[4] In the local manufactures a depression soon set in. Even Naginchand Jhaverchand, once the king of pearls, had to close his business and retire.[5]

The crisis continued after the initial period of instability, particularly for those engaged in small-scale industries. Since the luxury manufactures were hardly a priority for the colonial rulers, the needs of these industries were often sacrificed to military contingencies. Pearl merchants had to deal with new duties on imported pearls, then with tight controls over the export of finished necklaces.[6] Owing to import restrictions on precious metals, *jari* traders faced skyrocketing prices for gold and silver, crucial materials used in *jari* production.[7] The situation was as serious in the silk industry, where high prices for imported dyes drove up the prices of silk goods and greatly reduced sales.[8] Artisans throughout the city struggled to make ends meet.[9] Surat's dependence on the production and sale of luxury goods, which had made possible the survival of the urban economy before the war, now rendered the city especially vulnerable to economic collapse.

After 1917 the city's problems were compounded by rapidly rising prices. The inflation of the later war years was a direct outgrowth of conscious government policies designed to meet exigencies of the war effort. The imperial administration, concerned with obtaining railway wagons for military transport, placed serious restrictions on the commercial use of the railways, causing shortages in most essential commodities imported into the city. The price of salt, kerosene, ghee, firewood, milk, vegetables, and grain all escalated sharply.[10] In just one week during 1918 the price of *juvar* (a barley-like grain) rose 50 percent.[11] The cost of wheat once rose more than 15 percent over a few days.[12] The burden of escalating prices fell most heavily on out-of-work artisans, traders with limited goods to sell, and middle-income residents living on fixed salaries.[13]

Some enterprising merchants undoubtedly benefited from these uncertain conditions and were able to amass large profits. A few made fortunes through speculation in cotton futures in unofficial markets on the outskirts of the city. Others hoarded grain in hopes of profiting from the steady inflation.[14] The war called for a new type of trader, one less bound by the older concerns of local *sheths* with reputation and trust.

Yet even for the most successful businessmen, the period was a time of considerable frustration. During the war the imperial administration introduced a host of economic policies designed to ease the government's financial difficulties, to improve the flow of goods for export,

and to alleviate inflationary pressures. These measures established novel restrictions on local commerce. Authorities in the Bombay government established price controls over a wide range of commodities, including fuel and piece goods.[15] District officials controlled the use of railway wagons, at times allocating passes only to those merchants who agreed to accept low profits.[16] The government also clamped down on cotton speculation and adulteration and raided clandestine speculation operations.[17] Not surprisingly, many of the politically radical merchants of the postwar period were men who had participated successfully in the burgeoning cotton and grain trades and who bristled at the new obstacles the government now placed in the path to further profits.

On top of new commercial controls came new taxation. As A. D. D. Gordon has argued, the war years were a watershed for the merchants of the Bombay Presidency, in which businessmen moved from a peripheral position in the imperial revenue structure to a central one. Faced with difficulties in meeting its expanding costs, the provincial government increased the income tax and imposed a "super tax" on the higher income brackets. In the presidency as a whole, the level of income taxation—almost exclusively an urban tax—increased nearly *ten* times between 1915 and 1921.[18] In Surat the amount of income tax paid by local merchants at least doubled between 1916 and 1918, then continued to accelerate afterward.[19] Perhaps more upsetting than the amount of the income tax demanded, however, were the new tax forms, which required local traders to reveal detailed information about their business practices and personal wealth. Since merchants acquired credit largely on the basis of their reputations, many felt threatened by having to divulge facts which had previously been secret.[20] On top of all this came government's pleas for war loan subscriptions, to which Hindu and Jain merchants offered a silent resistance.

The fact that Surat's wartime crisis was a product of government policy could have escaped no householder, no matter how ill-versed in colonial statistics. The British administration had now entered the lives of the citizenry in an unprecedented manner, imposing controls that affected most city dwellers' livelihoods and personal statuses. The Surtis' need to involve themselves in the civic arena, where the new policies could be most effectively confronted, became increasingly urgent.

THE CRISIS OF MUNICIPAL POLICY

The policies of Surat's municipality only intensified the severity of the crisis. The period of 1914–19 was one in which the Bombay government tightened its hold over municipalities. Just before the war, the

thirty years. The government changed voting procedures to allow greater secrecy, increased the number of elected councillors from fifteen to twenty (out of a total of thirty), and granted the council the right to choose its own president. But officials worried that granting these new powers would lead to rampant corruption, factionalism, fiscal chaos, and a decline of public services, all at a time when provincial government was financially ill-prepared to rescue municipalities from disaster. Thus, as Bombay extended constitutional reforms with one hand, it imposed new controls over local self-government with the other. As a result government actually strengthened its ability to shape municipal policy.[21] Freed increasingly from the need to be responsive to local sentiment, the municipal bureaucracy entered into areas of urban life previously beyond its purview.

The expansion of municipal activity actually began before the war, when the local body, pressured by Bombay, passed a set of bylaws designed to improve sanitary conditions. In 1913 an officer of the provincial government, a Mr. Orr, had drafted standard bylaws for all cities in the presidency. The Bombay administration then tried to compel all its municipalities to adopt the model rules. At first, Surat's councillors approved only a few of Orr's eighty-six provisions, arguing that the rejected bylaws were unsuited to local conditions. The district collector and the provincial government eventually pressured the council to make nearly sixty of Orr's rules into law.[22]

These new bylaws reflected imperial interests and objectives, not the needs or preoccupations of the city's residents. The urban planner Patrick Geddes, who visited Surat in 1914, objected that the regulations concerning house and shop alignments had been blindly adopted from Western models and served no local purpose.[23] British officials acknowledged the unpopularity of the measures, one stating in typically colonial language that the rules were "a good deal in advance of public opinion on the subject."[24] Residents were vociferous in expressing their objections, repeatedly filing complaints with the municipality. One petition opposed new drainage restrictions, arguing that "the right to discharge the overflow of their privies into the streets is a long established right of all citizens."[25] Others challenged rules regulating the storage of tar and resin, requiring the registration of births and deaths, and banning caste feasts on city streets that lasted longer than two hours.[26]

Especially repugnant were the new building regulations. The bylaws required that buildings in the city take up no more than half the total space available for construction; they also regulated the height of new structures and the amount of ventilation. In essence, residents were suddenly unable to use as they wished substantial amounts of land

which they controlled and for which they had obtained title certifying ownership. As the collector observed, this rule was "the point at which the public interest comes in contact with the private profit of landholders in a city like Surat." He failed to notice that the regulation caused serious difficulties for small householders and traders, who needed all their land for their houses or shops and who were often too poor to provide the required ventilation. Dozens of objections to the rules poured into the council from local householders; builders complained at what they considered to be arbitrary restrictions. Nevertheless the municipality adopted the stringent building code under heavy pressure from the provincial capital.[27]

In the past council bylaws had often proven impossible to implement. Municipal committees, municipal officials, and honorary magistrates had frequently turned a blind eye to the enforcement of regulations—sometimes, one imagines, either as favors to kinsmen and friends or in return for small payments. But provincial officials were now willing to provide considerable administrative muscle to back up regulations. They recommended the appointment of a municipal commissioner whose authority to enforce bylaws and supervise public projects could not be checked by the councillors. Surat's collector backed the suggestion, arguing that such a step was "not only merely desirable but imperatively necessary in the interests of the public at large," and insisting that factionalism, absenteeism, inefficiency, and corruption had all intensified since his own responsibilities as president and chief executive officer had been curtailed.[28] He stressed that issues such as modern school buildings and extensive drainage works were pressing, and a "capable executive officer" was essential if these matters were to be handled in a "businesslike fashion."[29] The Bombay government proved receptive to such arguments. It appointed H. Denning, an officer of the Indian Civil Service, as municipal commissioner.

Denning's appointment struck at the roots of informal patronage networks that many councillors had built around themselves. The council retained its legislative functions, particularly control over the budget, but the various subcommittees which had held power in the implementation of law were stripped of their executive functions. Only two committees remained. City dwellers soon found it extremely difficult to bring pressure to bear on an officer of the Indian Civil Service. Denning was intent on enforcing the letter of the new bylaws, not caring whether he was popular. In his first year in office, cases in municipal courts went from 510 to 1,748; the number of fines assessed increased from 441 to 1,570; and the amount realized in fines from 601 rupees to 3,371 rupees.[30] A number of builders were successfully pros-

ecuted. After 1916 these figures dropped because, as the collector put it, "The public are beginning to realize the regulations are meant to be observed."[31] Yet residents continued to resent the strict enforcement of the new rules. In some areas, Denning observed, "owners of property seek by every subterfuge to evade the operation of the laws."[32] Small acts of opposition continued against municipal regulations, but the presence of a strong executive officer certainly weakened the effectiveness of all but the most subtle forms of everyday resistance.

While he was able to carry out the enforcement of municipal regulations with special vigor, the commissioner proved unable to provide the city with new civic services. Since imperial finance had dried up during the war, local bodies could no longer obtain the grants they needed to begin any significant new public projects. Surat was unable to build new schools or provide new sanitary facilities. The system of local government by commissioner thus never fulfilled the promises that British officials had made in justifying its imposition.

Urban reform, however, had always been more an imperial than a popular concern. In words grounded in the colonial language of improvement, Denning himself concluded, "The public has little or no objection to crowded schools or dirty streets or primitive arrangements for lighting. It has, on the other hand, a deep-rooted objection to increased taxation, and the elected councillors are not allowed to forget this point."[33] Unfortunately for local householders (and the councillors), municipal taxes had to be raised substantially to maintain services at old levels. Moreover, the municipal body generally chose to increase direct taxation, the form most despised by Surtis. With one swift gesture, the commissioner ordered a revision of house-tax evaluations that raised house-tax revenues over 20 percent. More than two thousand residents filed objections to their appraisals, forcing the local body to appoint a special magistrate for several months to hear the cases.[34] Water-rate collections and rates for cesspool cleaning also rose,[35] while new bureaucratic procedures made it increasingly difficult for traders to obtain refunds from their *octroi* duties when they reexported goods from the city.[36] Given the unsettled conditions in the Surti economy and the rising level of income taxes, the increased burden of municipal taxation was considerable.

Thus government, whether imperial or municipal, pressed upon the Surtis in new ways during World War I: taxing, regulating, and controlling. For most residents, contact with the colonial administration was more regular and more unpleasant than ever before. Increasingly, the actions of individuals in the municipality and in public associations assumed new relevance for residents of the city.

THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY: THE INNER DOMAIN OF POLITICS

The crisis brought about by imperial and municipal policy in turn led to a crisis of authority in the inner arenas of Surat's politics. Unsettled wartime conditions produced dislocation in a wide range of local political structures, accelerating old tensions and generating new ones. Among high-caste Hindus and Jains, the disruption of authority relations was particularly acute. World War I marked the abrupt end of the Samast Vanik Mahajan, the decline of numerous other critical institutions, and radical contraction of the domain once controlled by *sheths*. By the end of the war Hindu commercial magnates had ceased to act as intermediaries between their social groups and the administration. The arena controlled by English-educated politicians assumed a new significance for high-status residents.

Several processes, all set in motion by the war, produced uncertainty for entrenched merchant families. First, economic instability led directly to the dissolution of some of the city's great commercial firms. The most notable example was the pearl merchant, Naginchand Jhaverchand, who ceased to play any important political role after his business went bankrupt.[37] There was no doubt a corresponding upward mobility of new commercial families at the time that partially counteracted these trends. For example, Dahyabhai Sundarji Desai, an Anavil Brahman from the village of Abrama, made a small fortune in cotton during the war. By 1918 he had become the leader of the cotton merchants' *mahajan.*[38] But such people were not able to assume the authority of the older *sheths* immediately. They did not belong to families of great repute in the city or have long records of patronizing Vaishnava Hinduism or Jainism. Because of their nouveau riche status, they also could not hope to win British recognition as natural leaders.

Second, Surat's municipality became more important politically during the war years. On the one hand, the local body confronted the Surtis in new ways. On the other, the municipality seized the initiative in countering some features of the crisis. In previous periods of inflation, such as the 1899 famine, the Samast Vanik Mahajan had pressured grain merchants to refrain from exporting foodstuffs. During the war, however, it was the municipality that took steps to cope with rising prices.[39] In 1918 members of the council sent Denning to Bombay to obtain a greater allotment of railway wagons so that more grain could be imported into the city. He returned with commitments for a substantial increase in Surat's quotas. Late in the war period, the local body also opened cheap grain and fuel shops, offering prices well below market rates.[40] These steps served to check serious grain shortages and to avert the potential for grain riots. Noting the municipality's assump-

tion of moral and political roles once played by the *mahajan*, the *Gujarat Mitra* asked in one of its columns, "Is the *mahajan* really necessary?"[41]

Third, a few *sheths* who had served as hinge figures between their community and the colonial administration lost credibility as a result of their inability to break their bonds with British officials. These *sheths*, sometimes title holders and often proud of their close ties with government, were unwilling to antagonize the administration by leading militant movements. A protest against the new income taxes epitomized their difficulties in confronting government effectively. In 1918 a number of commercial magnates, following the lead of cloth merchants in Ahmedabad and Bombay, held a meeting of more than two thousand traders to oppose the new taxes.[42] Leadership of the movement was assumed by such notables as the Mahajan Sheth, the Nagarsheth, and Ishwardas Jagjivandas Store, all men who had won medals or titles and whom the British accepted as local headmen. Drawing upon well-established traditions of merchant resistance through collective noncooperation, the traders resolved to refuse to fill out their forms or to submit their taxes.

The notable leaders of the movement, however, tried to make certain that their activities were not seen as a direct challenge to the British. Throughout their protests, they maintained a meek and deferential posture, repeatedly stressing their loyalty and their dependence on their ruler's will. One likened the traders to cattle dependent on a benevolent master. Store insisted in one speech, "We are loyal subjects of our government and the government is our *mabap* [mother-father], we make our pleas just as a child asks its *mabap* [for food and water] when it is hungry and thirsty." The traders deliberately distanced themselves from the growing home rule agitation.[43] Even so, the government was not willing to hear the merchants' pleas. When it decided to prosecute Store and several other magnates for not paying their taxes, the great merchants quickly capitulated, submitted their forms, and paid their taxes, leaving the disgruntled traders without leadership. Store's abandonment of the movement left his prestige severely damaged. Even the moderate newspaper *Gujarat Mitra* criticized the influential *sheth* for abandoning his followers at a critical moment.[44]

All in all, the position of the old *sheths* eroded because mercantile leaderships were ill-equipped to deal with the various crises posed by the war. In the past a *sheth*'s authority had been based on his ability to enhance the collective integrity of his community, but now most magnates proved unable to protect the interests and honor of the high-caste population. The politics of the inner domain alone were no longer sufficient to address the Brahman-Vaniyas' most vital concerns. And the *sheths*' older methods of approaching government—through deferential relations with individual civil servants—no longer worked

in the wartime environment, when pressures from outside India introduced new inflexibility into colonial practice.

The diminution of older leaderships manifested itself most dramatically in high-caste institutions which had long been under the control of prominent *sheths*. In many of these institutions, struggles for power developed as new figures rose to challenge established power holders. These men often successfully challenged the position of the older *sheths*, but generally they failed to establish their own authority. Conflict was usually couched in precolonial political idioms, centering primarily on issues deemed critical to community integrity—purification procedures, overseas travel, marriage, and commensality. But a new element injected itself into some of these disputes: the representativeness of the older leadership.

The most important institution shaken by factional battles was the Samast Vanik Mahajan, which was torn asunder and rendered impotent by conflicts over how to preserve Vaishnava Hinduism in the unstable wartime environment. Around 1914, a few families belonging to the Dasha Modh Adalja Vanik *jnati* announced that they had become followers of the Aga Khan, the leader of the Khoja Muslims. When some of these families, headed by a trader named Bhagubhai Dahyabhai, wished to return to the Vaniya fold a short time later, the *mahajan* agreed to allow them back if they performed a purification ceremony. The organization's leaders, however, failed to arrive at a formula for the purificatory rite. A few *sheths* clearly felt that the ex-converts should not be allowed to return to the community.[45] Unable to reach a decision, the *mahajan* called a gathering of all the Vaniyas to settle the matter. In this meeting, a split quickly developed. One group, led by Jasantrao Veragiwala, demanded that the Vaniyas come to a decision by public vote. Ishwardas Jagjivandas Store, a member of the old leadership, countered that vote taking violated the *mahajan*'s traditions. After much noisy disagreement, Store, the Mahajan Sheth, and several other important magnates walked out. The new party remained, claiming control of the *mahajan* and choosing Veragiwala as its *sheth*. The meeting then passed a resolution that the ex-converts be allowed back into the organization after they performed certain ritual procedures before a priest of the *mahajan*. The offending families quickly did so and signed a public apology.[46]

In the following weeks, the two factions carried on a vigorous debate in Surat over whose organization was the real *mahajan*. The older party distributed a handbill questioning the legitimacy of the decision-making procedure adopted by Veragiwala and his followers and objecting to the purification procedures accepted at the meeting. Bhagubhai Dwarkadas, whose family had enjoyed the leadership of the *mahajan* over the past several generations, provocatively signed this handbill

"Mahajan Sheth." Veragiwala responded by printing a series of notices in local newspapers. There he claimed that participants in the *mahajan* gathering had expressed their independent opinions with "courage and mature consideration," argued that the purification procedures had been proper, and insisted that Dwarkadas could no longer claim headmanship of the *mahajan.*[47] He warned that if his decisions were not accepted, the *mahajan* might fall into permanent factionalism, which would spell its death.

This contention proved prophetic: after 1916 neither party was able to establish its leadership among the Vaniyas. Members of the older faction refused to acknowledge the purificatory rite undergone by the ex-Agakhanis. In 1919 Dwarkadas and his followers issued an edict prohibiting *vahevar* with the entire *jnati* of the Dasha Modh Adaljas and with other persons who had eaten with the short-term converts.[48] Most Vaniya groupings simply ignored this ruling. The Dasha Lad Vaniyas old *mahajan* and to carry on social intercourse with whichever Vaniya *jnatis* they pleased.[49] The new group, however, was equally unsuccess-
jnatis they pleased.[49] The new group, however, was equally unsuccess-
ful in establishing its legitimacy. Veragiwala and his followers hesitated to hold the feast that would formally receive the former Agakhanis back into the Vaniya community, apparently because they feared that the ex-converts had not sincerely given up the Khoja faith.[50] The new *mahajan* thus became moribund almost as quickly as it had formed.[51] By the end of the war, both organizations had effectively disappeared from Surti politics.

The collapse of the *mahajan* removed a major focus of local political life. But the crisis of authority spread far beyond this single institution. Upstarts challenged powerful *sheths* in a number of high-status *jnatis*, often undermining the very basis of group organization. The Visha Lad Vaniyas divided over the question of widow remarriage, at one point carrying their conflict into the courts at considerable expense to both parties. In 1919 some Visha Lads asked the *maharaj* of Mota Mandir, the most important Vaishnava religious leader in the city, to arbitrate between the two parties. The *maharaj* at first refused but consented after obtaining a promise from both factions to honor his decision. But after he had rendered a decision disallowing the new party from holding marriages, the challengers rejected his decision and announced that they would no longer conduct *vahevar* with the old faction.[52] Similar disputes also broke out among Kayasth *jnatis* over commensal rules[53] and among Nagar Brahman groupings over foreign travel.[54]

The same processes were at work among Jains. The Visha Oshaval Jains fought over purification ceremonies to be given children of remarried women and to women brought from outside traditional mar-

riage circles. In the temporary absence of their *sheth,* the Visha Oshavals appointed a committee of twelve members to discuss the matter. But the committee went on to consider a number of other subjects, including whether the old *sheth* enjoyed permanent authority over the *jnati.*[55] This produced tremendous internal discord. The Jain Sangh also became incapacitated by factionalism during the early war years.[56] Though the two sides in the conflict eventually resolved their differences, the *sangh* found itself unable any longer to enforce its rulings in the disputes of various subcastes.[57] After 1920, it had become nearly as inert as the Hindus' *mahajan.*

Not all high-caste organizations were embroiled in such turmoil, and not all dissension led to the disintegration of the inner arena's most important social institutions. Most occupational *mahajans* and some *jnati* organizations remained major foci of activity for their members. But the domain controlled by the old *sheths* was undoubtedly shrinking. Internal conflicts often entered the courts, where they were subject to the arbitration of outsiders, thus damaging the reputation of all contending parties. This crisis in leadership thus contributed further to high-caste residents' feelings of insecurity about their *abru* at a time when their statuses and livelihoods were already seriously threatened by administrative changes. The need for new forms of leadership capable of coping with the city's crisis became increasingly serious.

Low- and middle-status Hindus, on the other hand, may have escaped these disruptive processes. Existing evidence suggests that the *patels* of the *puras* continued to exercise great influence over their members for decades after World War I, and *panchayats* continued to play important roles in regulating occupational and social morality among such groups as the Kanbis, Khatris, Golas, and Ghanchis.[58] The headmen of these organizations, of course, had never built close ties with the administration and thus were never in a position where they were forced to choose between their groups' concerns and patron-client bonds with the British. More important, the war had not undermined the critical importance of the *jnati* to economic organization for artisans and petty traders; one might speculate that the depressed economic conditions induced many members of these communities to rely more heavily on protective services provided by caste *panchayats.* Thus the crisis of authority in the inner arenas was confined largely to high-caste society.

THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY: THE CIVIC ARENA

In the civic arena, the wartime crisis also intensified local tensions, as competing factional groupings fought for control of the municipality and local public associations. These struggles for power, however, did

not have the debilitating effects of the conflicts in institutions like the *mahajan.* Instead, they produced a heightening of the importance of public politics.

Competition among members of the English-educated elite between 1914 and 1919 reinforced rather than transformed the principles and terminology governing the civic domain. The home rulers—who emerged as the chief contenders for civic power—radicalized local politics by trying to mobilize Surti householders into a mass movement that challenged British authority. This challenge stretched public discourse to new limits, but it failed to break outside its bounds. Ultimately the creation of novel forms of political language would have required a degree of psychological autonomy from colonial structures that the home rulers were never able to muster. Like the more moderate politicians who had preceded them, they sought to influence civil administrators through bargaining with the colonial rulers and by working within colonial institutions. Neither they nor their rivals could make the leap in imagination necessary to cut loose from public rhetoric, their primary means of bringing pressure to bear on the civil servants of the Raj. Both groups competed for recognition as public leaders and asserted the justice of their claims along the lines of British extraparliamentary principle. Each struggled to establish that it knew how to promote the city's development, that it represented the people, and that its members were Surat's true nationalists. Each accepted the colonial mythology that there was a single path of societal evolution. This inability to formulate a political language which would make public culture sensible and emotive for the larger body of city dwellers resulted in the failure of both to develop sustained followings in Surat's population despite the general crisis of the war years and the growing vacuum in urban authority.

The nuclei of the two groups that competed for power in municipal-national politics came from the moderate and extremist factions already discussed in the previous chapter. In 1915 the moderates still controlled the municipal council and the Surat District Association. Their leader was Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta, a Nagar Brahman lawyer who was president of both institutions. Mehta was firmly committed to the development of modern urban services in Surat and had won great praise in administrative circles for his energy in pursuing civic reform. British officials considered him loyal, dependable, and capable. Mehta's followers constituted a majority of the elected councillors and even included a few government nominees.

In social background, the extremists were quite similar to the moderates. They came from high-caste Hindu or Jain families and had acquired considerable English education. Their leaders were Dahyabhai Desai, an Anavil Brahman lawyer, and Prasannavadan Desai, a land-

lord and the son of a prominent Nagar Brahman lawyer. Like the moderates, they aspired to recognition as public leaders. A few had won positions on the municipal council by espousing the cause of local grain and cloth merchants upset with the imposition of new *octroi* duties, and many had been involved in earlier campaigns to change the municipal franchise. Though shut off from the upper echelons of power in the Surat District Association, most were members.

The appointment of the municipal commissioner in 1915 was the chief spark reigniting conflict between the two factions. After the government nominated Denning in 1915, Dahyabhai, Prasannavadan, and their followers rose in protest. The commissioner's activities cut into the influence they enjoyed on municipal committees and threatened the interests of Surtis such as the grain and cloth merchants, whose support they had cultivated for years. The Mehta group, on the other hand, obviously wishing to retain its strong ties with government, supported the appointment. Over the next four years, the issue of the commissioner's appointment was debated hotly in the council, in public meeting halls, and in the press.

At first the debate was chiefly over the issue of whether the appointment would promote or inhibit the development of municipal services in Surat. The moderates insisted that a strong executive hand was essential for the improvement of the city's roads, sanitation, and education. Thakkoram Kapilram was at the forefront of local efforts to ensure the commissioner's appointment, at one point winning the plaudits of the district collector for "displaying a somewhat rare and very commendable public spirit."[59] His opponents offered a very different opinion of what constituted the public good. In petitions to the governor of Bombay, they argued that the government had never fully demonstrated the necessity of the appointment and that the high salary of an ICS officer was likely to divert funds from essential civic projects.

> Your Excellency's petitioners respectfully submit that Municipality is not wanting in capable men; but it is in need of large funds for the working of several useful and necessary schemes—such as drainage, school buildings, playgrounds and others. The hands of the Municipality are practically stayed by the financial requirements which should be largely and generally supplemented by Government if good schemes are to be carried out. The appointment of the Commissioner, therefore, will entail an additional burden on the Municipal finances, and will seriously hamper it in undertaking any necessary work without further burden on the already overtaxed people of the city.[60]

The Desais' followers carried on their campaign with vigor, sending petitions to Bombay and sponsoring resolutions in the council. As municipal elections approached in 1917, they became increasingly deter-

mined to prove that the people of Surat were behind them and set themselves up as candidates for seats in the general ward and in seven of the twelve regular wards. These elections were conducted in an environment of excitement quite novel to Surti campaigns. Some contenders printed handbills representing their views on municipal issues and denouncing the positions and records of their opponents. Tension grew as the time of voting approached. On election day, minor scuffles broke out around the polling offices as agents scurried to win votes. There were rumors that some candidates had imported voters from outside the city. It was also the first election in which women could vote, provision even having been made for females living in seclusion to cast their ballots by proxy.[61]

In the general ward—composed largely of educated professionals, government servants, and pensioners—the key issue was clearly that of the municipal commissioner. Here Prasannavadan, Dahyabhai, and a more lukewarm opponent of the commissioner, Chhanmukhram Mehta, campaigned against Thakkoram Kapilram for the ward's three seats. Prasannavadan was particularly active in pursuing votes. He called meetings of his potential constituents to discuss municipal questions and, according to supportive journalists at the *Bombay Chronicle*, "to revive and raise the character of the public life of Surat and to educate the electorate."[62] At these meetings he addressed a wide range of municipal measures, but he was most vigorous in his attacks on the commissioner system, asserting that "official control had degenerated into official interference" and that "expert opinion without necessary preliminary study of local conditions was responsible for the confusion and waste in municipal administration."[63]

Such attacks undoubtedly had appeal for voters disgruntled with the commissioner's activities. Even the three opponents of Thakkoram Kapilram were surprised by their success. All three were elected, and Thakkoram was forced to accept government nomination in order to retain his council seat. Members of the extremist group also won in many of the regular wards. Once in office, they were able to remove Thakkoram from the presidency. They threw their support behind a compromise candidate, a Parsi lawyer named Jamshedji Antia, under the condition that Dahyabhai Desai be selected vice president. They also gained control of the two municipal subcommittees.

By capitalizing on widespread popular dissatisfaction with the commissioner and by employing new election tactics, Thakkoram's opponents had swept into power in the local body. A closer glance at the campaign outside the general ward, however, reveals that the elections had not marked a complete transition to a mass politics of handbills and public meetings or a total shift to an appeal rooted in civic and

constitutional principle. Since, owing to taxpaying qualifications, no ward contained more than a few hundred voters, candidates could and did build their followings along the lines of affective relationships such as caste, kin, friendship, and patron-client bonds.[64] Most continued to depend upon influential and moneyed men to act as agents in their wards. On election day these agents shuttled voters to polling places in their cars, ensuring that supporters would cast their ballots. Candidates also cultivated personal obligations by constructing pavilions in front of the polling offices, where voters were seated and given betel leaf, cigarettes, and refreshments. In some wards, very local concerns were the key. In Sonifalia, for example, a ward with a high Jain population, the campaign centered on whether the incumbent had advocated use of a lethal chamber for the destruction of stray dogs.[65] A few of the commissioner's opponents, such as Kanaiyalal Desai (later the leader of the local Congress), were defeated by candidates with stronger connections in the wards.

Outside the core wards of high-caste voters, few candidates made clear their position on the commissioner system. Many relied on constituencies controlled by leaders of the dominant community in the ward. Despite the new excitement surrounding the campaign, seven of the seventeen elected seats in the regular wards were filled in uncontested campaigns. Jamshedji Antia, for instance, won an uncontested election in Nanpura, an area of town dominated by the Parsis. Tayyebbhai Maskati, a Bohra *sheth* who had not taken sides in the conflict, easily won his seat in Begampura, a largely Bohra ward. In Mahidharpura, where the voting population was overwhelmingly Kanbi by caste, a Jain candidate was simply overwhelmed by the two Kanbi candidates, one of whom came from a family that had filled the ward seat for nearly two decades. Even before the election, the *Gujarat Mitra,* which supported Mehta, had expressed its consternation about the role community sentiment, "personal influence," and "collusion" were playing at the expense of the public good.[66] Though the paper was obviously attempting to make a case for its own candidate, it clearly pointed to factors other than civic issues that would play a role in determining the outcome of the election. Thakkoram would later claim that the commissioner system had been irrelevant outside the general ward.[67]

The election campaign of 1917 thus illustrates the extent to which bilingualism still characterized the political style of most participants in the civic arena. Inside the municipal council and in the local press, the dominant form of political expression remained public discourse, yet in most of the city's neighborhoods, the language of civic expression was often overwhelmed by appeals based on personal ties and obligation.

The ability to employ multiple idioms remained essential to the development of political influence. But at the same time, bilingualism perpetuated the reliance of most members of the citizenry on the communication specialists versed in the political traditions of the rulers. Though the public sphere expanded in its significance, it was still a limited domain in which only a tiny proportion of Surtis fully engaged.

Despite the mix of appeals they had employed in achieving their local ascendancy, the extremists and their allies were now in a position to claim a popular mandate for their campaign against the commissioner. Once in office, they pressed their case that the changes in the municipal government ran counter to the ultimate principles of justice in the liberal tradition—public opinion, freedom, and political education. In 1918, several months after the election, the municipal councillors passed a resolution condemning the appointment, which they forwarded to the Bombay government. This resolution argued that the system of government by commissioner was "autocratic" and failed to reflect the "will of the locality." It tended to "destroy the zeal of the councillors in municipal affairs by reducing them to a mere debating body, dealing thus a death blow to the object of giving political education to the citizens." In perhaps their most telling rhetorical stroke, they linked their cause to British anti-German feeling, stating that the presence of a strong executive officer on the municipality "Prussianized the system of local self-government" and was "repulsive to the principle of local self-government as practised in England." The councillors claimed the prerogative to run municipal affairs without outside interference: "Being British subjects, and having received English education under the British system, we have imbibed the spirit and principles of free British institutions and we claim as British subjects, the British spirit of freedom in our self-governing bodies."[68] In short they insisted that their own schooling and commitment to public life provided firm evidence that Surat had developed politically far along the scale of progress and that the introduction of the commissioner system thus ran counter to the imperial principle that authority should be devolved to Indians.

The moderates cast their case in essentially the same language, though they presented a very different image of local sentiment on the commissioner system and a very different interpretation of how self-government and devolution bore upon the issue. After the elections of 1917, a person signing his name as "T" (almost certainly Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta) wrote a series of letters to the *Gujarat Mitra* claiming that the polling results should not be taken as a mandate against the commissioner.[69] He questioned whether even the defeat in the general ward was a true reflection of public opinion, offering his own, more elit-

ist understanding of the concept: "The true test of cultivated and enlightened opinion is not the number of votes but the weight and position of persons recording the votes. . . . No sane men will maintain that the opinion of Dr. Steele [the minister at the Irish Presbyterian Church, who undoubtedly voted for Thakkoram] shall have the same weight as that of a police naik or a mill jobber or a clerk in an office drawing twenty rupees."[70] Later, "T" challenged the assertion that the commissioner system violated British principles of self-government, arguing that even in England central government exerted considerable control over local bodies.[71] His supporters on the *Gujarat Mitra* suggested that a strong executive was very much in accordance with the spirit of devolution, arguing in one article that "the system of civic administration by Municipal Commissioners in large mofussil cities was an attempt to place gradually on a level with modern cities municipal government in those places, to lift them out from a position of control and subordination that they occupied for two generations to be placed in a state of dignified independence consistent with time and the march of education."[72]

Thus, while disagreeing over the value of the commissioner system, both sides operated within the same political discourse. Each offered its own evaluation of whether public opinion was behind the commissioner and whether the system was in accordance with British traditions of local self-government. Both arguments hinged on an interpretation of where Surat stood in the march of political education and what policies best served this process. For the English-educated politicians of Surat, wartime conflicts had reconfirmed rather than undermined the centrality of the language of public politics in the civic arena.

THE POLITICS OF HOME RULE

Until 1917 neither set of actors in these conflicts had seriously invoked the third dimension of public discourse—the nationalist dimension. Members of both factions considered themselves true patriots, but neither tried to dispute the claims of the other to represent the Indian nation. The Desais' followers had long maintained loose ties with the Tilak-led nationalists of Maharashtra; a few reactivated these as the debate over the municipal commissioner intensified. As early as 1915, V. I. Pandit, a local lawyer, attended the Bombay Provincial Conference organized by N. C. Kelkar, a close associate of Tilak, and introduced a resolution against the appointment of commissioners in mofussil municipalities.[73] Still, during the early years of the war, national politics remained on the back burner, holding little relevance in the local struggle for control of the civic arena.

Outside Surat, however, the Indian political scene was changing. In several major presidency centers, nationalist politicians opposed to the moderate Congress leadership and eager to pressure the British into granting very serious concessions of power to Indians formed a new organization: the All-India Home Rule League. This organization, modeled loosely on the Irish Home Rule League, defined its goal as home rule for India and proposed to educate the people of the subcontinent to demand this end. In Bombay two rival branches had formed by 1916. One was organized by Tilak's Maharashtrian followers; the other, led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Shankarlal Banker, and Benjamin Horniman, followed Annie Besant, an Englishwoman who had achieved great recognition as a theosophist and a spokesperson for India's rights. This second branch developed much closer ties with the Gujaratis of Bombay and the mofussil.[74] Banker and Besant began to organize chapters of the Home Rule League in upcountry centers. With the help of K. V. Vora, a local Nagar Brahman doctor and a theosophist, they founded Surat's first branch in September 1916.[75]

At first few local politicians expressed interest in the league. The city's chapter had only six members in its early months, none of them prominent in the municipality or in local public associations. As late as July 1917, the district magistrate confidently asserted, "I doubt whether any one of any standing will accept the post of President of the local branch of the League, which remains vacant."[76] Despite their past support for Tilak, the Desais and their followers were for the time being unwilling to take a step that many British officials were likely to view as seditious.

Yet almost immediately after the extremists won control of the local municipality, they did an about-face and joined the league to the man. Dahyabhai Desai became president of the local chapter, Vora its secretary. The chapter resolved to undertake a campaign "to train the people on public opinion regarding Home Rule."[77] It began to hold frequent public meetings and to invite leading Congress figures to give speeches in the city in order to cultivate popular support for home rule, calling over fifty meetings in 1918 alone.[78] The organization's leaders also attempted to reach out to rural areas, hoping to stimulate interest in home rule among the peasantry of South Gujarat. Seemingly, victory in the municipal elections gave Desais' followers confidence to associate themselves with a more assertive nationalism. Some hoped that the home rule movement would enable them to pressure government more effectively on issues related to the upcoming Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Dahyabhai Desai clearly had ambitions to move into the legislative council in Bombay, whose expansion in size and responsibility was clearly imminent.

By early 1919 Surat's home rulers had assumed the mantle of national leadership in the city. The league reported 1,325 members in the city, while 68 offshoots in the district recorded an additional 2,342 members. The Surat District Association, which only a few years earlier had 62 members, was swamped by the new recruits to congress activities. In August 1918 Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta and Shavakshah Khasukhan, the chief editor of *Gujarat Mitra,* resigned their posts as president and secretary, respectively.[79] This left the Desais and their followers with firm control over both of the most important nationalist organizations in the city. Isolated from the congress, Thakkoram and his followers became increasingly identified as servile dependents of the British, people who lacked patriotic spirit. Nationalism, which had once been merely an expression of identification with India as a whole, now clearly became associated with the demand for home rule.

Between 1917 and 1919, the home rulers set about mobilizing—or, in their word, "educating"—the citizenry on the question of home rule. Here, however, they achieved only mixed success. Some of their activities, such as the visits of national congress leaders, produced considerable local enthusiasm. When Lokamanya Tilak visited Surat in November 1917, thousands of residents went to the station to greet him. There he was garlanded repeatedly by members of the Home Rule League before volunteers carrying league banners escorted him along with Dahyabhai Desai in a procession through the streets. Storekeepers had prepared decorations of their wares for the visit and hung them in front of their shops. League sympathizers had draped banners over their homes acclaiming Tilak's visit: "Long Live Tilak Maharaj," "Vande Mataram," and "Swaraj Is My Birthright" (Tilak's famous saying). One set of banners juxtaposed—in what seems today a truly fantastic combination of political imagery—the pictures of King George, the emperor of British India, with that of Shivaji, the seventeenth-century Maratha warrior.

After the initial ceremony at the station, the procession stopped frequently so that leaders of various neighborhood groups could garland the famous nationalist. Later in the evening Tilak spoke at a meeting organized by the local home rule chapter on the public grounds behind the Princess Theatre. Nearly ten thousand people were in attendance. The dais from which Tilak spoke was bedecked with nationalist inscriptions and a placard showing Tilak and Annie Besant standing before the houses of Parliament appealing to Britannia. Volunteers and members of the Home Rule League stood in a place of honor. After a brief address, Tilak spoke in favor of home rule and praised the efforts of the local chapter to awaken the local population. The visit of Annie Besant several months later was of a similar character, also attracting a large attendance.[80]

The effectiveness of such ceremony lay not so much in its novel characteristics as in its ability to inject nationalist elements into the already established form of imperial ritual. When compared with the visits of imperial dignitaries described earlier, much of the day's observances involved efforts of the home rulers at symbolic substitution—that is, the replacement of imperial content with national. The prominent visiting congress leader assumed the place of the governor or viceroy; the president of the Home Rule League took the place of the collector as chief welcomer representing the city; the league replaced the municipal council as chief sponsor of the visit and as the chief local public body singled out by the dignitary for honor; and nationalist slogans replaced wishes for the emperor's or empress's health. The use of the phrase "long live" and the presence of George V's picture in nationalist banners suggest that imperial models still exerted a powerful influence over the home rulers' conception of political authority. Nationalist ritual marked an attempt to construct the legitimacy of nationalist leaders—both at the local and all-India level—by placing these figures on an equal plane with those of the imperial hierarchy.

From the numbers present and the enthusiasm reported even in moderate newspapers, the visits of Tilak and Besant appear to have been successful in accomplishing the home rulers' immediate end of generating a large turnout. Yet just as huge crowds at viceregal visits should not be taken as a sign of fervent popular allegiance to empire before the war, the attendance of substantial segments of the urban population at ceremonies honoring prominent Congress leaders is not firm evidence of a general commitment of city dwellers to national politics during the war. The desire of the Surtis to view a renowned yet distant authority figure was perhaps as significant in the size of the crowd as commitment to home rule. Once the great Congress leaders departed, the home rulers proved unable to generate sustained popular support. Few listed on membership rolls participated regularly in league affairs. Attendance at meetings of the local league averaged from one to two hundred. When the league attempted to raise money for Annie Besant's scheme of national education, it could collect only 1,000 rupees, less than one-half of 1 percent of the amount the government had raised in war loans from the city.[81] National politics remained the preserve of a tiny, though growing, number of high-caste educated residents.

The home rulers were not able to build truly popular constituencies in part because they did not directly address the concerns of the city's traders and artisans. They capitalized on deeply rooted but as yet unfocused dissatisfactions with government policy, particularly with the activities of the municipal commissioner, but they seldom spoke in a lan-

guage that evoked the moral indignation or addressed the identity of the city's underclasses. The home rulers saw justice and injustice largely through the filter of constitutionalism, addressing in their meetings issues such as the upcoming Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, local self-government, restrictions on the press, the imprisonment of national leaders, and congress campaigns in other areas of India.[82] A typical resolution, passed after the order restricting the movements of Gandhi during the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 had been withdrawn, asserted: "In the opinion of this league, the actions of the Bihar government withdrawing the notice issued against Mr. M. K. Gandhi under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code is quite in keeping with the best traditions of British rule and justice and this League therefore expresses its satisfaction for the prompt action taken."[83]

This was public discourse in almost pure, unadulterated form, virtually without any resonance in local culture. For the most part, only those predisposed to nationalism or to an interest in constitutional questions could be aroused by such stale legalistic language. The campaign against the municipal commissioner, too, had focused largely on the legitimacy of the appointment on constitutional grounds rather than on the incursions of the officer into the householder's domain. The home rulers did not question the government policies most responsible for the local crisis, such as import-export regulations, controls over railway wagon use, and bylaws passed by the municipality. When the new income-tax regulations of 1918 stirred resistance by thousands of local merchants, most members of the league simply ignored the protest, thus missing a major opportunity to channel local dissatisfactions in a nationalist direction. Their general silence on these kinds of issues stemmed from an inability to perceive any relationship between their own conception of political justice and the concerns of the mercantile community. For the most part, they seem to have accepted the British policies in question as essential to urban reform and as necessary in light of the empire's wartime difficulties.

The home rulers did little to cultivate a new political appeal that might have captured the enthusiasm of the Surtis. They drew largely upon a national symbolism that had evolved outside Gujarat. Their speeches emphasized general congress themes such as the need for home rule, national education, and *swadeshi*. They often opened their meetings with chants of "Vande Mataram," the Bengali slogan that had become part of the Congress repertoire. In some cases, borrowing from the wider Congress appeal verged on the absurd. During Tilak's visit, for instance, volunteers carried banners praising Shivaji, a figure of great symbolic importance in the region of Maharashtra from which Tilak came, but who was remembered best in Surat for his repeated raids on the city's merchants.[84] The bulk of the political vocabulary

used by home rulers, however, derived ultimately from British political traditions. They did not employ powerful symbols from any of the subcultures of urban Gujarat.

One speaker at a local home rule meeting in 1917 characterized the problem of the league by admitting that he "was fully alive to the fact that after all the people who ask for Home Rule for India were only a microscopic minority."[85] His solution for this problem, however, was that the home rulers needed to be more assiduous in educating the public; that is, they needed to develop more propaganda along the lines that already existed—not that they needed to switch the terms of the debate altogether. In essence, the home rulers were asking the local populace to undergo a conversion, to make a leap of faith from viewing the world through the language of *dharma* and *abru* to seeing it through a civic discourse imbued with Western evolutionary assumptions. Most local residents found such a leap impossible to make. When residents were addressed more effectively, as in the election campaign of 1917, it was partly through the idiom of affective ties and deference, an idiom that essentially preserved the distance of the city dwellers from the civic arena as it cultivated their support.

Despite the apparent assertiveness of their call for home rule and their critiques of British policy, the home rulers were committed to a political-symbolic order that had been framed by their predecessors in civic politics. They sought to expand their public roles in imperial institutions such as the municipality and the provincial legislative council and in public associations where they could draw the rulers' attention to their concerns. This commitment made it difficult for them to conceive of political principles outside the terms that had long been in use within the civic arena. They sought to persuade the civil servants of the Raj that they understood how British concepts of justice applied to India better than the officials themselves. They hoped to prove the genuineness of their allegiance to the empire and to demonstrate that their rulers were wrong in regarding them as seditious. As one visiting speaker put it, "To demand and achieve Home Rule for India was to do the greatest service for the Empire. India with Home Rule would not only be a jewel in the British Crown, an ornament in the Imperial Exhibition, but also a tower of real strength to the whole Empire both in times of peace and war."[86] Even the most ambitious goal they expressed—the establishment of home rule—seemed to involve the insertion of Indians in slots now held by the British rather than the creation of a new sort of political system. The home rulers felt that they were entitled to these slots by their education and advanced views. Operating under the constraints of bargaining with their rulers, they found it difficult to create new political models more evocative to the Surtis.

The eagerness of the home rulers to affirm their loyalty and com-

mitment to reform led them to take steps that ultimately undermined their position. The most critical of these was their endorsement in 1919 of an ambitious scheme to establish compulsory primary education for all children under twelve. In adopting this scheme, Surat became the first municipal body to adopt universal and compulsory education on the subcontinent. For moderates and extremists alike, the measure proved to be a source of great pride, a sign that Surat might soon attain European levels of education. The law was not, however, popular with most residents. Artisans and petty traders resented attempts to force their boys and girls into schools, since children often performed useful functions in small factories and shops.[87] Once the law was put into effect, attendance officers had to hound many middle- and low-caste families into sending their children to schools.[88] Some Muslims expressed fears that the requirement that girls attend school would disrupt the system of purdah, while others complained that no provision had been made to fund the teaching of the Quran and Islamic subjects. Even after provision was made for religious education, many Muslim parents refused to send their children to municipal Urdu schools. Most merchant and service families, by contrast, resented the measure because their children were already enrolled in the city's primary schools, and they would now have to pay an additional cess of 20 pice per rupee (roughly 10 percent) of their direct tax payment without obtaining any additional service.[89] Thus the home rulers' insistence on proving their special capacity for spurring urban development led them to support a regulation that deepened the residents' sense of alienation from the municipality. The popular dissatisfactions arising from the primary education scheme rendered the home rulers increasingly vulnerable to attacks from the newly rising group of Gandhi's followers.

The home rulers also remained committed to participation in the ritual and institutional structures of colonial rule. When Gandhian politicians later asked residents to refrain from participating in imperial ceremony, to boycott provincial assemblies, and to work to destroy the Surat municipal council from within, the home rulers were paralyzed, torn between their commitment to the nation and their belief that self-governing structures were necessary for the development of their city and country and unable to react to Gandhi's renunciatory idiom. As we shall see in the following chapter, most retired from the civic arena convinced that madness had overtaken local politics.

CONCLUSION

Despite the seeming militancy of the league campaign, the home rulers operated under many of the same mental constraints as their predecessors in public politics. To a great extent, they were trapped in the lan-

guage of their own attacks on colonial policy. They criticized the British for inhibiting Surat's movement toward a more ideal moral-political order, but their image of what was ideal stemmed primarily from their conception of what was British. Thus, though they conceived of themselves as proponents of freedom and self-rule, they were themselves subject to the colonial hegemony. The very process of negotiating with Anglo-Indian civil servants drew them into a discourse of alien origins. The scope that constitutional language allowed for debate and criticism, for self-advancement without the appearance of subordination, may be partial explanation for its ability to capture the imagination of local elites. But it had little appeal for Surat's underclasses, who remained baffled by the strange rituals at work in the municipal council and public meetings, and who continued to express their resistance outside the domain of civic politics altogether.

For most residents of Surat, the crisis of World War I persisted. Local householders were potentially ready to follow leaders who could more directly evoke their own values and preoccupations, so when the followers of Gandhi rose to power after 1919, the Surtis quickly rallied to their support. Unlike the home rulers, the Gandhians created a novel language, rooted in Gujarati principles of morality, that possessed a strong potential for appeal to local Hindus and Jains. They inspired the city's inhabitants, creating new allegiances among them and mobilizing them to reject the colonial system.

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PART FOUR

The Gandhian Interlude

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The Rise of the Gandhians

The crisis of World War I created new strains for the political system of Surat City. The colonial administration now encroached more directly than ever on the lives of Surtis, threatening their livelihoods and their social reputations and disarming many of their traditional techniques for defending themselves against the demands of the state. On the one hand, government became more foreign, more difficult to manage, than ever before. On the other, the importance of dealing with the administration and its actions became greater than at any other time in the city's history under British rule. Yet most Surtis still did not conceive of entry into the civic arena as a possible, effective, or moral recourse to their wartime difficulties; they contested imperial and municipal policy through everyday methods of resistance outside public politics, methods that had proved increasingly ineffective in wartime. The home rulers had been unable to capitalize fully on the dissatisfactions of the population, largely because they had failed to fashion an appeal capable of prompting local residents to abandon their cautious resistance. Politics in the city thus continued to run in two distinct channels: an elite current characterized by constitutional principle in the outer arena of local politics, and an underclass current, informed by precolonial idioms, at work in the city's inner domains.

In early 1919, however, a new set of political aspirants rose to prominence in Surat. These men and women, who were disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, introduced a novel language into local politics. Like the home rulers, they viewed themselves as public-spirited reformers, as leaders of the people, and as nationalists. But they transformed the meaning of these central concepts of civic politics through creative, syncretic juxtapositions with notions rooted in local conceptions of reli-

giousness and honor. Armed with this powerful rhetoric, the Gandhians attempted to break down the conceptual walls between the inner and outer arenas of local politics, to smash colonially derived assumptions about the political world, and to persuade many city dwellers that it was not only possible to oppose the government and make it bend to their wishes but also a moral imperative to do so. The new language empowered the Surtis, providing them with a sense that they could achieve some resolution of their wartime crises through a political movement whose immediate goal was an end to colonial rule in India.

MAHATMA GANDHI AND GANDHIAN DISCOURSE

The idiom employed by the new figures who rose to power in Surat after World War I owed its origins to one exceptionally imaginative and innovative figure: Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi had developed his novel form of political reasoning outside India during a period of roughly five years, 1905–10, when he was leading the Indians of South Africa in protests against the white government. At this time Gandhi was wrestling with two different quandaries. The first was his personal quest for spiritual truth, a quest which had led him to study the scriptures of the major world religions and to embrace an ascetic life involving celibacy, radical simplification of his diet, and the renunciation of his bourgeois household for a communal, rural life at Tolstoy Farm. The second was his inability to check the racialist policies of the South African administration toward the Indian community. Since 1894 Gandhi had taken up the grievances of his followers largely through constitutional means, appealing through petitions to the English Parliament and the government of India and stressing the rights of Indians as citizens of empire in an effort to bring pressure on the local governments of South Africa. But these techniques had proved futile in halting the growth of discriminatory legislation and treatment. Parliament was, for the most part, unwilling to interfere in the affairs of territories that were being granted increased powers of self-government. Then, with the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, all metropolitan influence was formally ended, and power came to rest entirely with a set of whites fiercely determined to check any inroads into their power. While the Indian community was becoming increasingly powerless and vulnerable, the faith in the evolutionary march toward progress and representative government—a faith that had animated Western political theorists, colonial ideologues, and Indian nationalists alike—became increasingly difficult to sustain.[1]

Because of the exclusionary policies of South African governments, Gandhi had never been implicated in the structures that he was trying

to confront and was thus not subject to the political and psychic constraints on his counterparts in India. Almost uniquely among South Asian leaderships of the time, he was in a position to reject many of the basic premises on which European rule had been constructed and legitimized. As the obstacles placed in the way of his community grew greater, Gandhi broke decisively from any rhetorical dependence on the principles of constitutional justice and the British sense of fair play and arrived at a new political language and a novel conception of social realities that partly resolved both his central quandaries. Suddenly he came to view the two processes of attaining spiritual knowledge and acquiring political efficacy as one and the same. The key, he now believed, lay in a new technique of resistance that he labeled *satyagraha* (literally, holding on to the truth). Simply described, *satyagraha* involved deliberate, nonviolent defiance of laws considered unjust. But to Gandhi, this technique was more than a set of tactics; it was a form of struggle requiring strict adherence to the highest moral principles. He defined those principles with a vocabulary grounded in the idiom of Hindu religion: *ahimsa* (nonharm to living creatures), *tapas* (self-suffering or penance), *tyag* (renunciation), and *dharma* (duty). The search for personal salvation and religious truth (*satya*), he now concluded, was the same as the struggle to better the human condition. "For me," he later wrote, "there is no distinction between politics and religion."[2]

By linking two previously discrete forms of discourse, Gandhi was able to forge a new political logic that departed radically from the conventions and assumptions of public culture. He directly challenged the moral ascendancy of progress and constitutionalism. In his most systematic treatise, *Hind Swaraj,* he rejected the major measuring rods that most colonial apologists and Indian nationalists had employed in asserting or accepting the superiority of British civilization: modern medicine, law, the *Pax Britannia,* Western technology, industrial growth, English education, and representative government. These Western institutions, he argued, were responsible not for civilization at all but for materialism, self-indulgence, dependence upon machines, poverty, and contentiousness, both in their land of origin and now in India. Continued emulation of these ideals would reproduce an "Englistan" or "English rule without the Englishman," once independence was achieved. Gandhi reserved special scorn for British representative institutions. Parliament, he insisted, "is like a sterile woman and a prostitute."[3] Its members acted only under pressure from the electors and their parties rather than on the strength of their convictions. Voters, too, frequently shifted their views on important national questions, often in response to newspapers or to powerful orators. Citi-

zens were more concerned with their "rights" (by implication, their selfish interests) than with their duties (*dharma*) to their society. Moreover, the right to vote had been acquired through violent movements, which tainted its accomplishment. Since democracy involved such a sharp disjunction between personal morality and political action, its adoption by India would entail the country's ruin.[4]

Questioning the desirability and inevitability of evolutionary change, Gandhi rejected the fundamental myths upon which colonialism had been based. At the same time, he constructed his own countermyth, one built around the assumption that Indian civilization had an intrinsic superiority which contact with England was beginning to undermine. This superiority he found in essences that Orientalists had often employed in their own characterizations of the subcontinent: spirituality, antimaterialism, the importance of custom rather than law in conflict resolution, the principle of nonviolence, and the belief in the social duties inherent in a person's inherited social place.[5] But he turned upside down the colonial-nationalist assumption that these qualities were a sign of India's weakness and backwardness, suggesting instead that they were the source of a very special greatness. "A nation with a constitution like this [India's] is fitter to teach others than to learn from others," he argued, at once giving the word *constitution* a novel twist and reshaping the meaning of *political education.*[6] He similarly transformed the concept of the nation, defining the Indian nation less in terms of an overarching political integration than of supposedly shared cultural essences such as the religious temperament of its population, its capacity to absorb and reconcile people of different faiths, and the distribution of key pilgrimage sites in different corners of the subcontinent.[7]

At the heart of Gandhi's new philosophy was the concept of *swaraj* (self-rule), a word Indian nationalists had often employed as an equivalent for independence. For Gandhi, however, the term suggested not only national self-rule but also personal self-restraint. True *swaraj,* he insisted, involved refraining from a wide variety of selfish attitudes: the desire to accumulate wealth and property, the willingness to engage in bitter legal disputes, and the eagerness to emulate Western institutions and behaviors.[8] The ideal public worker, the *satyagrahi,* was essentially a *sannyasi* (ascetic), who willingly gave up commitments to family and kin for the sake of the nation and humanity. Only by exercising personal self-restraint on a massive scale could Indians become truly "free."

In redefining terms that had long been part of public politics by linking them with concepts grounded in Hindu religious discourse, Gandhi fashioned new political principles that both the British rulers and the leaders of Indian politics found disturbing. Even his closest

mentor in the Congress, the moderate G. K. Gokhale, considered Gandhi's views so at odds with his own notions of common sense that he asked Gandhi to spend his first year back in India traveling around the country, "with his ears open but his mouth shut."[9] But though the English-educated elite in India greeted him skeptically, his new political approach had proved a powerful one in contributing to the formation and growth of Indian movements against the South African state, both because it challenged the assumption of moral superiority upon which racialism was predicated and because it had a special potency for his Indian followers. It was only after he had created this new language for talking about justice and political action that he was able to channel the Indians of South Africa into a series of powerful movements that achieved some limited yet still remarkable successes.

In Surat residents had long followed Gandhi's doings, through the newspapers and through stories carried back to the city by emigrants to South Africa returning to Gujarat. Even before he achieved any significant influence in the Indian National Congress, Gandhi enjoyed a local reputation as a person of extraordinary qualities. In 1916, when he visited Surat for the first time, the welcome he received rivaled anything granted to a visiting governor or viceroy. Huge crowds gathered at the train station to gain his *darshan* (a viewing) before escorting him through the city's streets in a triumphant procession. Neighborhood groups, business firms, and public organizations repeatedly stopped the progress of Gandhi's carriage in order to garland the great visitor and present him with addresses. Expressions of reverence for Gandhi as a person of great self-control and spirituality issued from many groups, including both extremists and moderates. The *Gujarat Mitra*, the most prominent vehicle of educated opinion in the city, paid close attention to how Gandhi traveled (in third class), to what he wore (a swadeshi cap, dhoti, and shirt, with a white blanket for a cover) and to what he ate and drank (bananas, peanuts, red grapes, coconut milk, a lemon, and water), remarking at his tremendous simplicity on each score. M. M. Rayaji, soon to become a key figure in Surat's Home Rule League, referred to Gandhi as a *sannyasi* who had devoted his whole life to *deshseva* (service to the country). All speakers at local public meetings used honorifics of religious derivation in referring to him: *deshbhakt* (literally, devotee to one's country), *karmavir* (one brave in following the path of *karma*, i.e., action), or *mahatma* (a great spiritual teacher).[10]

Yet despite these efforts to make sense of Gandhi through recourse to the vocabulary of Hindu belief, the presence of the Mahatma had not yet provoked serious rethinking of the dominant conceptions of local politics. The leaders of the municipality and the Surat District Asso-

ciation were too caught up in the structures and assumptions of the civic arena to imagine a more thoroughgoing application of Gandhian principle. After the Mahatma departed from the city, political discussion and debate fell back easily into their old linguistic and ideological confines. Local politicians essentially ignored the radical vision of *Hind Swaraj,* which, if applied literally, would have led to direct challenges to institutions and values that they held dear. They reconciled their reverence for Gandhi with their attachments to colonially derived principles and institutions only by continuing to maintain a sharp distinction between the domains of religion and politics. Gandhi the great spiritual teacher and Gandhi the leader of South African Indians could arouse universal admiration, but Gandhi the challenger to civil society could be conveniently overlooked.

It was thus left to a new political elite, one with little previous access to local power, to appropriate and apply Gandhian discourse in a way that seriously threatened the existing political order.

THE RISE OF THE GANDHIAN ELITE

The Gandhian elite of postwar Surat was a diverse set of men and women, none of whom enjoyed any significant political authority before 1919. Members of the new elite had neither been prominent participants in the civic arena nor leaders in the politics of local communities. All desired to have greater influence over the society in which they lived, but like Gandhi during his formative period in South Africa, they enjoyed a certain degree of freedom from the constraints of working within well-established political roles and a well-defined political idiom. Only they were able to break out of the mold imposed by existing political rhetoric and to innovate with a new political idiom based on the Mahatma's thought.

The persons who composed the Gandhian elite were of three different kinds of social origin. First, there were Surti traders, some of whom had built prosperous commercial enterprises but still lacked the status of the city's greatest *sheths*. Dahyabhai Sundarji Desai, for instance, was a cotton merchant who had achieved considerable success during the war, rising to a position of leadership in the cotton merchants' *mahajan*. Desai, however, was a relative newcomer to the city and carried little weight outside his occupational group before 1918. Chimanlal Chhabildas Chinai, a Dasha Porvad Vaniya, had had a somewhat checkered career dealing in precious metals and had also spent some time in South Africa, where he had worked as a clerk in an Indian firm. During the noncooperation period, he became a journalist, writing biting articles attacking the British that eventually led to his arrest.

Second, there were English-educated professionals, persons who were little different in social background from the leaders of civic politics but who had not held elected position or exercised much influence in local public associations. M. K. Dixit, who would become president of the municipality during the noncooperation movement, was a Nagar Brahman doctor, with medical training from England. His friend, M. M. Mehta, like Dixit, in his forties, had been a health officer in municipal service before resigning for private practice in the first few years of the twentieth century. Both had supported Tilak as volunteers during the Surat Congress of 1907, but they were otherwise inconspicuous in public life. A younger man, Champaklal Ghia, was a Modh Vanik doctor who entered the Gandhian elite by dramatically resigning his appointment in government service in 1920. The wives of several of these men, especially Gunavantbehn Ghia, also became significant public leaders during the noncooperation period.

The figures most responsible for shaping the new syncretic idiom in Surat, however, were men with rural origins, many with little English education. For the most part, they belonged to one of the two dominant landed groups of South Gujarat, the Kanbis (or Patidars) and the Anavil Brahmans. Of these, the most significant were Dayalji Desai, an Anavil youth, and the Kanbi brothers Kalyanji and Kunvarji Mehta.[11]

Compared with the politicians who dominated the municipality, all three young men had modest education. Kunvarji had been to school up to the seventh standard, Dayalji up to the vernacular final, while Kalyanji had a brief college education. All had served as minor government employees for some time. Dayalji had worked in the revenue office of Surat District before resigning in 1912; Kunvarji and Kalyanji had both taught primary school in Varad, a village in Bardoli Taluka. In 1909, Kunvarji quit his job, moving to Surat to take up a small business. His brother soon followed him to the city and began to teach high school.

Like many other young Indians who had acquired some schooling, Dayalji, Kunvarji, and Kalyanji were eager to make their mark on society. They did so first as promoters of education in their communities. In 1906 Dayalji founded the Anavil Ashram, where he ran a school and hostel for young Anavil boys and girls who came to Surat for schooling. In 1911, Kunvarji started a similar boarding house for Kanbi schoolchildren, which became known as the Patidar Ashram. Both institutions attracted rural youth eager to gain sufficient education to win employment as teachers or clerks or to meet immigration requirements in South Africa.[12] The organizers of the ashrams thus developed access to a committed group of caste fellows with extensive rural connections.

Using these new institutions as their base, the three rural youth be-

came involved in efforts to improve the status of their castes through social reform. Dayalji and Kunvarji both founded journals in which they urged the Anavils and Kanbis, respectively, to give up "corrupt" customs such as alcohol consumption, child marriage, and after-death feasts. All three helped organize caste associations and conferences in hopes of raising their communities' moral standards. Kunvarji encouraged the adoption of high-caste, Sanskritic behavioral norms, urging Kanbi women to observe four-day pollution periods during menstruation, organizing Vedic rituals for Kanbi marriage ceremonies, and performing sacred-thread rites in his ashram. He and his brother carried on their activities as Patidars rather than as Kanbis, thus staking a claim to the higher status that the former name implied.[13] The Mehtas and Desai developed their ashrams into centers for propagating piety and spiritual devotion, spending as much as an hour daily on religious instruction.[14]

As their reforming efforts widened, the ashramites began to develop new expressive modes for describing and defending their activities, modes that linked the idiom of Sanskritization and the language of public reform. The founders of the Patidar Ashram saw their activities among the Kanbis as part of the process of political education. In setting forth the purpose of the Patidar Yuvak Mandal (Patidar Youth Association), they stated: "Besides providing living arrangements for students who particularly go on to higher education after primary schooling so that there will be more education in the community, the purpose of this institution is to supervise . . . the students' behavior, education, and health, to help them in their physical, mental and moral development so that they become a boon in the future to their *jat, jnati,* and society and *thus to prepare them as exemplary citizens.*"[15] An article in *Patel Bandhu,* the Patidar caste journal, similarly claimed: "The Yuvak Mandal has been formed for spreading education among the Patidars, for social reforms, for abolishing harmful customs and traditions in the caste, for *mobilising and cultivating public opinion* and for protecting the interests of the farmers."[16]

The two brothers and Dayalji also began to associate themselves with nationalist activities. They became involved in the boycott of foreign goods during the Bengal partition movement of 1905–7 and attended the Surat Congress of 1907 as followers of Tilak. When Karsukhram Vora formed the local branch of the Home Rule League in 1916, they were among the first to join. During an influenza epidemic in 1918, the Anavil and Patidar ashrams provided many of the volunteers for a Home Rule League inoculation program that stretched from the city to some of the remotest areas of the district. Slowly, they gained acceptance from the leaders of public life.

Yet the ashramites remained on the periphery of the civic arena.

They had never run for the municipal council, and they held no office in any important public institution. Certainly their position in the local Congress and Home Rule League was not prominent. Their names are absent from available lists of speakers, chairs, and introducers of resolution at public meetings before 1918. They were young men who wished to take leading roles in shaping society, but who had not yet received sufficient recognition to satisfy their personal ambitions or their social objectives.

Following Gandhi became a natural extension of their activities. Gandhi's conceptual linking of public work with personal moral reform, of anticolonial protest with the quest for religious truth, of commitment to civic service with the renunciatory behavior of the *sannyasi*, carried several steps further sociopolitical notions they had already been developing. His model of political leadership provided an ideal they were better suited to emulate than the dominant figures of Surat's public life, all of whom were partly locked into well-established political styles. They readily adopted Gandhi as a spiritual mentor and actively sought his sponsorship. Gandhi visited the Patidar Ashram and addressed members of the Yuvak Mandal during his first trip to the city. Later that year, he gave a recommendation to Kunvarji Mehta, who was traveling to South Africa to raise funds for his ashram.[17] Gandhi seemed impressed with the simplicity of life and the dedication to service that he found at both local ashrams, expressing at one point that he felt as if he were "in the midst of my own family members. . . . I have high expectations from these two organizations."[18] Such plaudits encouraged Kunvarji, Kalyanji, and Dayalji to devote themselves further to Gandhi and to reshape their institutions to approximate more closely the ascetic and service-oriented ideals that he had set before them.

In 1919, when Gandhi announced his intention to launch a nationwide *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Bills, the ashramites suddenly thrust themselves into places of great political prominence. This development was somewhat ironic since the issue of the bills itself was one that involved constitutional principle and thus fell entirely within the usual purview of the English-educated elite. The bills, which gave government extraordinary powers to deal with political crimes, seemed to the leaders of public life a violation of the civil liberties to which every citizen of the empire was entitled; the passage of the bill over the unanimous opposition of Indian members on the Imperial Legislative Council seemed an affront to the principle of popular representation. What gave the Rowlatt Satyagraha its novel character, however, was the mode of protest Gandhi had designed to defy the bills. The movement required a core group of activists to take a special, sacred, oath to disobey the laws in the spirit of truth and nonviolence, and it involved the par-

ticipation of the larger population in a day of mourning (*shauk*), purification (*atmashuddhi*), and penance (*tapascharya*), symbolized in fasting, bathing in the holy river Tapi, and closing shops. On the morning of 6 April, the day chosen for this statement of defiance, the chief *satyagrahis*, each clothed in the garb of a Hindu ascetic, bathed at the riverside, then offered prayers that the laws would be withdrawn. The *satyagrahis* then led a huge procession through the streets, terminating at the local Home Rule League office, now named the Satyagraha Mandir (Satyagraha Temple).[19]

Established public leaders felt a certain ambivalence about taking part in these activities. Most felt reverence for Gandhi, and all were eager to bring an end to the Rowlatt Bills; the *satyagraha*'s association with Gandhi and its religious idiom offered them an opportunity to reach out to large numbers of people more effectively than they had been able to do through their specialized appeal. Yet many were apparently uncomfortable with the possibility of arrest and with the intrusion of ascetic-devotional elements into a movement that to them involved only secular principle. Moderate politicians all abstained from observing the occasion. Even the home rulers were standoffish. The first four persons to take the *satyagraha* oath were Kalyanji, Dayalji, Narmadashankar Pandya, and Ratilal Desai, all young men associated with the two ashrams. Only at the last moment was Dayalji able to persuade Dahyabhai Desai, president of the league, to take the oath and wear the special dress he had prepared.[20] Several members of the league took the pledge only after hearing of Gandhi's arrest and deportation from the Punjab. Others never adopted the oath, maintaining an uneasy coexistence with the movement. The ashramites, by contrast, felt no hesitation about participating in all the rituals of rebellion the *satyagraha* involved, and thus suddenly moved to the political foreground.

The tensions between Gandhian principle and the conventions of municipal and national politics, however, became fully apparent only over the next two years. During this time, the ashramites and their allies pressed the implications of their rhetoric as they associated with the national movement of noncooperation. Virtually all the politicians accustomed to operating in a constitutional vein, by contrast, adjusted awkwardly to the new politics, almost unable to make sense of developments in a world they had once dominated.

THE RHETORIC OF GANDHIAN POLITICS

The Changing Meaning of Public Leadership

The decolonization of the language of Surti politics involved two different, but interlinked, processes. On one hand, the Gandhians re-

jected the common assumptions of public life, offering radically new understandings of the key terms of discussion and debate in the municipal-national arena. On the other, they injected into public culture a vocabulary that had previously been irrelevant to the civic polity, one originating particularly in the domains of religious practice and personal honor. Through these twin processes, the Gandhians created forms of expression that could only appear absurd to those who conceived of politics through the established paradigms of public culture.

The ways in which the Gandhians defied the usual conventions of civic politics can best be explored by contrasting their rhetoric and actions with those of their opponents in specific political battles. Three conflicts with the leaders of Surat's Home Rule League serve this purpose well. The language of shock and bewilderment that the home rulers employed as they sought to preserve their own idea of appropriate political behavior is particularly valuable in highlighting the disconcerting character of the Gandhian political style and idiom.

The first of these conflicts centered on the imperial peace celebrations held in the city in December 1919. More was at stake in the disagreements over the celebrations than the observance of a single event; the real issue was the importance of the principle of loyalty. Despite the aggressiveness of their nationalist stance, the home rulers still retained a commitment to the empire and had always sought to demonstrate their loyalty. Expressions of loyalty had indeed been critical to the logic of their political claims: if they were faithful subjects, then surely they were entitled to the same rights that any other citizen of the empire enjoyed. As municipal councillors, they had organized addresses for visiting governors and had participated in a number of other imperial rituals. Thus when the government announced its intention to hold celebrations of the peace in Europe, they enthusiastically agreed to take part. In November, Surat's municipal council, which was dominated by the home rulers, overwhelmingly passed a motion to spend 3,000 rupees on fireworks, illuminations, and the distribution of sweets to schoolchildren in celebrating the peace in Europe.[21]

The municipal resolution ran directly counter to Gandhi's call to abstain from the peace celebrations as a protest against government's failure to redress Indian grievances against the Rowlatt Bills, the investigation of the massacre of several hundred Indians by the British army in the Punjab, and, especially, the treatment of the sultan of Turkey after the end of World War I (known as the Khilafat wrongs). In urging this step, the Indian leader was implicitly suggesting a major break with accepted political convention. Loyalty, implied Gandhi, was no necessary attribute of those who took part in politics but was a conditional sentiment, dependent upon the empire's fulfilling its moral obligations to

the Indian citizenry. In Surat, the followers of Gandhi pressed forward this logic, announcing that they would organize a boycott of the festivities. A few weeks before the ceremonies, Kunvarji Mehta formed a ratepayers' association to protest the allocation of public funds for the occasion. Kunvarji and his supporters urged local citizens to show their respect for the Mahatma and the feelings of Muslims hurt by government's policies toward the Turkish sultan by observing a period of mourning during the celebrations planned by the government and the municipality.

The home rulers were stunned by this departure from accepted practice and were somewhat at a loss how they should respond. Dahyabhai Desai stated privately that Gandhi "could not have been in his proper senses" to have advocated boycott of the celebrations and that the Mahatma was trying to "appeal to the masses above the heads of educated Indians . . . who, he knows, would not take any notice of it." Even if Gandhi were to write him directly, he insisted, he would not change his position, since the Khilafat question had nothing to do with the peace celebrations.[22] The home rulers not only allowed the municipality to carry on with its program; they even organized their own special observance on the side to distribute sweets to school children.

When the day of the ceremonies finally arrived, however, the counter-observance organized by Kunvarji and his supporters proved far more successful than the observances planned by the local council, the collectorate, and the home rulers. The *Bombay Chronicle* reported that the city's streets were nearly deserted at the time of the central festivities. In the view of the Gandhians, they had convincingly demonstrated the antipathy of the people to holding celebrations when Indians were suffering terrible injustices.[23]

After the peace celebrations, the followers of the Mahatma went on to reject other imperial rites and to design their own modes of ritual life for Surat. The new forms of ceremony challenged the primacy of loyalty in the civic arena, substituting the value of commitment to the Congress and to the nation.[24] The leaders of the Home Rule League, on the other hand, were unable to conceive of nation and empire as in competition for the sympathies of the local citizenry. They clung tenaciously to ceremonial forms that had, by 1920, effectively been stripped of their symbolic power for most local residents.

Somehow, the breach between the two groups of nationalists over the issue of the celebrations was repaired, only to develop into a more serious rupture in late 1920. In this second conflict the issue was Gandhi's noncooperation program itself, which had won formal sanction at the special Calcutta Congress in September. This program issued logically from the arguments Gandhi had first set forth in *Hind Swaraj*. Noncooperation involved the resignation of titles and the boy-

cott of courts, government schools, and legislative councils, all of which symbolized, according to the Mahatma, a dangerous tendency of Indians to imitate Western norms slavishly. Gandhi visualized this campaign as a gigantic movement of renunciation which would bring British rule quickly to an end. His followers in Surat took up the cause of noncooperation immediately after the Calcutta sessions, arguing that participation in provincial elections, courts, and government-funded educational institutions was a sign of complicity with the British.

To many local politicians, however, the systems of education, law, and self-government were the essential building blocks of India's development. The role of each should be expanded, not restricted. As long-time advocates of constitutional advance, the home rulers of Surat were particularly perturbed by the decision to boycott the legislative councils. Several members of the league, including Dahyabhai Desai, had been interested in seeking positions on the Bombay council, assuming that they could use elected office to pursue greater self-governing rights for India. After hearing of the Calcutta Congress's decision, Dahyabhai, Karsukhram Vora, and M. M. Rayaji all vigorously objected to the council boycott scheme.[25] When Gandhi and his followers captured the national Home Rule League in Bombay, changing its name to the Swarajya Sabha (Hindi for Home Rule League) and altering its constitution to allow it to serve as a vehicle for noncooperation, Dahyabhai responded indignantly by expelling all those in Surat who agreed with these changes. In defending his ruling, made without taking a formal vote, Desai argued that the league was a legal and constitutional organization and could not include those who advocated extralegal, nonconstitutional means. Rayaji, supporting Desai's decision, denied the conflation of religion and politics embodied in the new Congress campaign: "Though I have complete respect for Gandhi, I must say that ordinary morality (*samanya niti*) and politics (*rajniti*) are completely separate."[26]

Willing to view the councils as expendable, and conceiving of the national struggle as entirely interconnected with questions of "ordinary morality," the Gandhians ignored these arguments and continued to pursue their agenda. After being expelled from the league branch, they founded their own local chapter, calling it the Swarajya Sabha, and used it to organize attacks against the home rulers.[27] They accused Dahyabhai Desai of being "autocratic" in his rulings and objected strenuously to his defiance of the decisions of the national body. This pressure undoubtedly had serious effects, since Dahyabhai and his compatriots, fearful of being stigmatized as opponents of the Congress, eventually decided not to pursue positions on the council. But they remained indignant about the Congress's order to abstain from the elections and legislative politics.

Several months later, as elections for the municipality approached, a third serious conflict, involving similar principles of public politics, led to the complete severing of ties between the chief home rulers and the Gandhians. Again the issue revolved around noncooperation. In February 1921, the officers of the local Swarajya Sabha, eager to give some concrete, dramatic expression of support for the resolutions drafted at the Calcutta and Nagpur Congresses, announced that they would mount a slate of candidates in the upcoming municipal elections. Once in office, these men would maintain noncooperation by refusing all government finance and supervision of the city's primary schools. The action at once endangered two of the dearest values of the English-educated elite: education and representative government. The policy of "nationalizing" Surat's educational institutions would first create great difficulties for financing local schools, which received one-half of their funds from government grants. It would also inevitably lead to the suspension of the local municipality since the provincial administration would never tolerate the elimination of its control. The Surtis would thus lose, at least temporarily, the constitutional powers they had taken decades to acquire.

For the home rulers, the election challenge presented a dilemma. They seemingly had either to go along with the noncooperators and sabotage their pet scheme of universal free and compulsory primary education or to oppose the effort and gain reputations as enemies of the Congress campaign to gain self-rule. Out of frustration, they instead chose a third course: outright withdrawal from the civic arena. Soon after the Swarajya Sabha had declared its intention to capture the municipality, seventeen councillors, mostly members of the league, announced in a manifesto to the voters of Surat that they would not pursue office in the upcoming campaign and elucidated their reasons for not running. In this document, they offered a spirited defense of their policies on education to the citizens of the city:

> The prosperity of every country depends upon education, and especially requires that everyone should learn to read and write. According to this principle, *every civilized country* has made education universal and compulsory. The Surat Municipality, taking advantage [of new education laws] at the first opportunity, was the first in all of India to adopt the scheme [of universal and compulsory primary education]. As a result, 5,000 new students are now going to schools. . . . In order to meet [the rising costs of education] it is our opinion that, rather than ending government aid and rather than having the government fund half the total expenditures now incurred by the municipality on primary education, we should obtain three quarters of our funding from the government. We have even already asked for greater funding. [Emphasis mine][28]

The manifesto also reaffirmed the councillors' commitment to constitutional procedure. "It is not right," they stated, "for us to break the laws framed by the government under which municipalities exercise their authority and under which we have entered the municipality as your representatives." In a somewhat tortuous, legalistic language, they argued: "It is dishonest to accept laws and take advantage of their provisions in order to enter the municipality on the one hand, and on the other to break those very same laws once in the municipality. By breaking this one set of laws, moreover, it wil become necessary to continue breaking laws on other municipal matters. We are sad to acknowledge that a time will come when we will have lost those rights of local self-government we now enjoy and that the municipality, after it is suspended, will cease to be an instrument of the people and will become one of the government."[29]

Finally, the councillors announced that because they did not want to create unnecessary divisiveness in the city or to be stigmatized for blocking the attainment of *swaraj* within one year, they would leave the field open to the noncooperators. This obviously was a painful decision, one that reflected an attempt to achieve some psychological resolution between their commitment to urban progress and their devotion to India and the Congress. The home rulers, however, continued to challenge the Gandhians to explain how they were going to finance local education. A letter to the *Gujarat Mitra* from Kanaiyalal Desai, a local landowner and member of the league, was particularly passionate: "Your acts," he objected to the Gandhians, "are a blow to the 'democratic form of government.' Instead of demonstrating our worthiness for *swarajya,* they show us to be unworthy. In a representative government, even when those holding office change, they can't just completely alter the established ways of conducting business."[30]

These arguments failed to persuade local noncooperators to change their course. Inspired by Gandhian principle, they were little concerned about whether education in Surat followed the standards set by "civilized countries" or whether constitutional rules would be violated. They objected to the assumption that India needed to prove its worthiness for self-rule; indeed they rejected the entire notion of the devolution of power. Their goal now was simply to bring about the end of British rule within the year. Refusing to consider any alteration of their plans, they announced their own candidates for the council, then campaigned vigorously in the final weeks before the April voting. After winning thirty-seven of the fifty council seats—ten of the remaining seats were nominated by government—they claimed to have won a decisive popular mandate for nationalizing the municipality. M. K. Dixit and M. M. Mehta were chosen president and vice president, and all

councillors not elected on the Swarajya party ticket were removed from municipal committees.

Once in power, the Gandhians immediately challenged the established protocol of council proceedings. In their first motion, they voted to approve funds for the presentation of an address to Mahatma Gandhi, defending this clear violation of law by questioning: "Why should a popular municipality hesitate to present an address to a leader of the people?"[31] Council discussion, conducted largely in English before 1920, now was exclusively carried on in Gujarati. Following the example of Ahmedabad and Nadiad municipalities, the noncooperators proceeded to implement their plans to bring national education to the city. They refused all government funds and rejected all government supervision. When the Bombay administration warned the councillors that their actions would lead to the imposition of direct government control over the schools, they responded by holding huge public meetings to rally support. Here they contended in their resolutions that democratic principles required the defiance of colonial law: "Whereas they were unable to modify their educational policy after ascertaining the wishes of the ratepayers, the accredited representatives of the ratepayers could not find it in their hearts to impose their will on their constituencies."[32] A similar motion was passed in the council halls, confirming the municipality's "sacred duty to give effect to the explicit mandate of its electorate" and inviting government "to recognize the principle of making the municipalities true self-governing institutions by reducing to the lowest possible extent official or external control or interference."[33]

A chess match of move and countermove ensued, with the Gandhians repeatedly outmaneuvering government. The provincial administration had intended to strike the first blow by wresting control of the schools from the municipality. But before it was able to accomplish this, the council transferred 40,000 rupees of its funds to the Rashtriya Kelavani Mandal (National Education Society), an organization headed by Dr. Dixit, to finance national primary schools free of government control. When Frederick Pratt, commissioner of the Northern Division, tried to pressure two Bombay banking institutions into stopping payment of this money, the noncooperators threatened to provoke a financial crisis by spreading the news that the banks had failed to cash the checks of an important municipal institution. The banks quickly paid the 40,000 rupees to the *mandal.*

The government responded to this clearly illegal action by deciding to seize the municipal schools and to suspend the council and appoint a Committee of Management in its place. At this point, the Gandhians had nothing to lose from a campaign of noncooperation with the mu-

nicipality. In a series of public meetings on the streets of Surat, they urged citizens to pay no direct taxes whatsoever to the committee. This campaign proved so successful that it eliminated nearly half the local body's revenues for almost two years. Urban services, especially road repair and sanitation, were drastically curtailed. The Universal Free and Compulsory Education Act effectively became a dead letter. Several times as many children between six and twelve attended the Rashtriya schools as the government-controlled ones. Many others went to no schools at all.[34]

In each of these three conflicts, the noncooperators through their words and through their actions demonstrated a readiness to depart from established paradigms of local politics. On each occasion, they questioned a key value of public culture—devotion to empire, constitutionalism, and universal and compulsory primary education—for the sake of their national goals. In attempting to wreck the provincial councils and the local municipality, they showed a willingness to sacrifice the most intense of all commitments of the English-educated elite, its adherence to representative institutions. Sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, they were easing civic discourse away from its moorings in evolutionary thought, offering a political language in which service to the nation, the people, and public good was radically dissociated from the notions of loyalty, progress, the law, and responsible self-government. They posited a new patriotism and a new form of popular leadership that rejected liberal discourse as the standard by which a people's capacity for self-rule was to be assessed. Caring little about whether the rulers of India would deem their actions proper behavior, the noncooperators felt free to step outside established conventions and understandings. They thus could offer interpretations of familiar words and symbols that were shocking, even incomprehensible, to those who had previously dominated public politics. One might say that they continued to employ the vocabulary of public politics but had rejected its grammar.

But such a conclusion is perhaps too sharply stated. There still were important areas in the rhetoric and actions of the new leadership that clearly demonstrate the continued hold of colonial conceptions. The Gandhians were as yet unable to imagine a complete dismantling of important aspects of public culture. Their difficulties in conceiving of an entirely new political order can sometimes be seen in minor details of their symbolic behavior, such as the minutiae of ritual observance. On one of his visits to Surat, local bands offended Gandhi by playing "God Save the King," apparently unconscious of the song's imperial meanings.[35] But other signs of continuity can also be noticed in some very central behaviors. In developing national schools, for instance, the non-

cooperators basically followed an old curriculum based upon English models. Besides injecting a bit of cotton spinning and hymn singing into the daily routine, little new subject matter was taught. This issue was certainly symptomatic of a larger problem. While individual actions taken by the Gandhians defied common understandings of the political world, the challenge to public life was never as complete as that envisioned in *Hind Swaraj*. Critiques of key values of public culture—education, representative government, and progress—often were implicit. Once noncooperation slowed, it was easy for values that had not been explicitly challenged to reassert themselves.

In the enthusiasm of the noncooperation years, however, many participants might have seen such imperfections in the new counterhegemony merely as signs of a consciousness only beginning to take shape. Most local participants in the movement, including both leaders and followers, genuinely believed that they were forging an India that would be dramatically different from that in which they were then living.

SACRED METAPHOR

The radicalness of the noncooperators' language, however, stemmed not just from its rejections and redefinitions of the established vocabulary of public politics; it issued also from the infusion into civic discourse of the potent terminology of devotional Hinduism and mercantile prestige. Gandhian rhetoric at once sacralized politics and politicized religion. While giving participation in municipal and national politics a holy and honorable significance, it injected into religious faith the idea of service to the people and the nation. By joining together two idioms that had previously been distinct, the Gandhians attempted to demystify the sterile, esoteric language of public culture, rendering it accessible and evocative to most local citizens. Moved by this powerful new rhetoric, many residents of the city came to view involvement in noncooperation as an imperative involving their most deeply held moral convictions.

The key to the success of the noncooperators lay in their ability to generate and employ expressions with a metaphor-like function. As anthropologists and historians have now begun to recognize, metaphor can play a critical role in reshaping perceptions of reality. By bringing together concepts drawn from distinct conceptual domains, metaphors create mental linkages between concepts that are difficult to understand, unfamiliar, and distant and those that are easily comprehensible and evoke powerful feelings of passion, anger, or excitement. In the process, metaphors transform understandings of both sets of princi-

ples. Richard Brown has argued: "It [metaphor] demands that we say 'no' to preordained categories; it also requires us to rearrange cognition into new forms and associations. . . . By transferring the ideas of one system or level of discourse to another . . . metaphor allows each system to be perceived anew from the viewpoint of the other."[36] Metaphor may be particularly significant during times of rapid change, since, as Brenda Beck has pointed out, it "is one of the simplest and most important mechanisms by which a shared mental code can be kept in touch with what lies 'out there.'"[37] Because metaphors often challenge entrenched ways of conceiving social and political phenomena, they are typically associated with persons outside existing power structures who have yet to develop strong commitments to established procedures and principles.[38]

Many of the expressions employed by local noncooperators were not technically metaphors, since these expressions were often meant quite literally. But like metaphor, Gandhian rhetoric created powerful cognitive associations between terms drawn from two previously distinct idioms: the distant, baffling, and emotively neutral language of public politics and the more immediate, emotionally charged language of Hindu and Jain religious experience. Through this creative appeal, the Gandhians forged powerful psychic connections between critical indigenous values and the notion of nationalism.

Sacred metaphor did not always have to assume verbal form. Often, it was inherent in the very gesture and ceremony of Gandhian politics. Under the noncooperators, the key form of collective ritual remained the public meeting. Public gatherings, however, differed significantly from those that had previously taken place. Meetings held under the auspices of the Surat District Association, the Home Rule League, and other prewar and wartime public associations had been affairs organized chiefly by the English-educated elite to draw up petitions to the provincial administration on issues of civic or national significance. The audience present on such occasions generally was quite small. Speakers who addressed these meetings often cared little about developing an appeal that would address the feelings of the larger population; most instead conformed closely to the staid language of constitutional principle. Attendees could express agreement with the speaker by clapping, by shouting "hear, hear" or "shame," and by signing petitions, but otherwise they did not participate. For the most part, public meetings were means of presenting a cause to the colonial rulers rather than a method of stirring popular enthusiasm.

Under the noncooperators, a bit of this older ritual form remained. Meetings still began with the nomination and the seconding of a chair.[39] Occasionally, motions condemning some government action

were proposed, seconded, and approved. Now, however, public meetings increasingly resembled an assembly of devotees gathered to hear the teachings of a *bhakti* saint. The very place of these meetings was imbued with sacred symbolism. The noncooperators abandoned such profane locations as the Naginchand Jhaverchand Hall and the Victoria Gardens—where most public gatherings had taken place in the past—for the Dacca Ovara, the huge grounds alongside the banks of the holy river Tapi. Attendees generally left their everyday clothes behind for the more ascetic garb of *khadi*. Often, before any speeches were given, participants sang *kirtans* (hymns) written in the style of traditional devotional songs. Even the method noncooperators used in calling public meetings and of signaling the audience to be quiet—by blowing conch shells—was consciously adapted from the Hindu epics.

The speeches made on such occasions were rarely concerned with framing the appropriate language of petitions. Instead speakers concentrated on generating emotional responses and political action from those present. While many earlier public meetings had been conducted in English, Gujarati now became the exclusive language of gatherings (except when Urdu was used before largely Muslim audiences). Equally significant, the form of public address underwent a drastic change. Speakers shifted their emphases away from elucidating constitutional principle to teaching moral truths. Most speeches in public meetings dealt little with wrongs committed by the government; the majority were sermon-like talks on the spiritual and political principles espoused by the Mahatma such as *ahimsa, satya, tyag,* and *tapasya.* Dayalji interrupted one talk on how India had lost its independence 150 years earlier to issue a lengthy exhortation to his audience on the inappropriateness of yelling "shame."

> Brothers, we should not say "shame." According to Gandhi's teachings, we should exercise control over our emotions in meetings like this. Our battle is one of *satyagraha,* not of *duragraha* [obstinacy, persistence in bad conduct]. The man who remains firm in *satya* does not lose his temper. He who loses his temper, defeats himself. . . . The way to break the chains that have been imposed upon a free people by these laws is not through the use of cannons or guns, but through *atmik bal* [soul force]. In the Treta yuga [the age of Treta in Hindu mythology], people would pray whenever a calamity struck. As a result Ramchandraji was born. A people who have faith in God can only be successful. God has caused Gandhi to be born for this reason. We should behave according to whatever teachings Gandhi gives us.[40]

This didactic style, imparting religious truths, making analogies to Hindu epics, invoking the authority and charisma of the Mahatma, marked a sharp departure from the rhetoric of pre-Gandhian politics.

For most Surtis, the new idiom had an immediacy and a power absent in parliamentary tradition and civic debate.

Within this larger style, it is possible to discover core rhetorical motifs clustering around certain key "metaphors." Each of these motifs played a major persuasive function in deflating colonial hegemony and offering powerful new cultural meanings that would inspire or even coerce participation in public politics. An exploration of the central motifs reveals how each worked to accomplish important persuasive objectives.

Duty (dharma, kartavya, faraj)

Perhaps the most central motif in the rhetoric of local Gandhians was the notion of *dharma,* or duty. Over and over again, speakers at public meetings stressed that the Surtis' *dharma* was involved in the struggles to redress the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and to bring an end to colonial rule. Satyagraha was a *dharmik* battle.[41] It was the sacred duty of the municipality to refuse government money for local primary schools.[42] To wear *khadi* (homespun cloth) was to protect one's *svadharm* (self-duty) for Hindu and Muslim alike.[43] It was the *desh dharma* (nation duty) of Hindus to support Muslims in the Khilafat movement.[44] Immediately after receiving word that the noncooperation resolution had been approved at Nagpur, students of the Sarvajanik High School passed a resolution which read: "In order to honor the invitation [*avahan;* literally, invocation of a deity to enter its shrine] of the Indian National Congress for the purpose of attaining independence, this meeting of Sarvajanik High School students resolves that as long as this school does not become national [i.e., by refusing government grants and control], we will consider it our *desh dharma* not to set foot in it."[45]

The very idea of a *desh dharma* extracted the notion of duty from its most common loci—the smaller descent-based local communities that had been the most important arenas of social action and identity for most residents—and reattached it to the wider collectivities of the public and the nation. This new construction created the possibility of a direct, unmediated identification with Surat and with India. As it moved to the domain of public politics, the word *dharma* continued to carry with it the meaning of a sacred and inescapable set of ethical obligations incumbent on individuals by virtue of their position in life. Having been born Indians, it suggested, Surtis had no other choice but to participate in the national cause if they were to remain morally upstanding persons. The term had an almost coercive quality; it attempted to preempt the possibility not only of opposition but also of apathy and inaction. And, of course, it imparted to nationalist behavior an intensely religious significance.

The Gandhians also linked *dharma* to the nation and the public good by a different, less direct means—by attempting to redefine the social duties of particular local castes and communities to include activities in support of the Congress. After the Calcutta meetings, the Patidar Yuvak Mandal, headed by Kunvarji, resolved that it was the "duty (*faraj*) of the Patidar caste as one part of the Indian nation" to participate in noncooperation for the "honor (*man*), prestige (*pratishtha*) and welfare (*hit*) of the country."[46] Kalyanji insisted in a 1921 public gathering that Muslims, too, were not exempt from their religious obligations to India: "If you are a true Muslim, you cannot wear foreign cloth on your body. You may say Allah-o-Akbar, you may recite prayers, and you might be called a Muslim, but I would not consider you a Muslim."[47] In other words, to be an acceptable member of one's own community, one must devote oneself to the larger collectivity of Indians. Such oratory obviously drew upon "primordial" loyalties in creating a sense of nationalism. But in a manner less commonly recognized by scholars, it had a reciprocal transformative effect on the primordial identification itself. Patidarness and Muslimness were now bound up in patriotism. Here again the Gandhians were attempting to create a sense of the inescapability of involvement in noncooperation.

The duties of women (*stridharma*), too, were a common theme in the persuasive efforts of local Gandhians. Noncooperators were the first in the city to make any special attempt to draw women into public politics. They attempted to capitalize on Gujarati ideals of womanhood that attributed to females the responsibility for acting as guardians of family honor. They urged women to attend general public meetings. They also arranged separate public meetings for women, sometimes bringing in female leaders of national importance such as Kasturba Gandhi (the Mahatma's wife) for the occasion. Speakers often were unrelenting in insisting that women had duties to perform in the noncooperation movement, particularly in wearing and making homespun cloth. "Just as it is woman's work to decorate the home," argued one female noncooperator, "so it is also the work of women to make *khadi* soft and beautiful."[48] In a visit to Surat in June 1922, Kasturba Gandhi harangued an all-female audience on its social obligations:

> It is true that one of our duties (*kartavya*) is to nourish and care for our families, but along with that we have duties to God. Without God what would come of the world? . . . We women should disperse the clouds that have settled over India. The women of Japan cut their own hair for use as rope to pull guns. The women of Germany made bullets for men to employ in war. We only need to sit at home and spin khadi. . . . Men are wearing khadi, but in order to encourage them, you, too, should wear khadi. Women in the Punjab have come to consider the

work of spinning entirely their own obligation (*faraj*). As a result, men will be able to do other [national] tasks.[49]

This appeal, of course, hardly posited a transformation of the character of family relations. Instead it suggested that a logical extension of women's roles in the home was involvement in the production of *khadi*. Such involvement, the Gandhians argued, was a major contribution to the nationalist struggle, in part because it was important in its own right, in part because it freed men to engage in other forms of struggle. The noncooperators of the 1920s had yet to envision any significant scope for women's involvement except as helpmates of men, spinners of yarn, and attendees at meetings. So the vocabulary of *dharma* clearly established new limits on the Surtis even as it projected itself into new domains.[50]

Honor and Shame (abru, svaman, pratishtha, *and* sharam)

Questions of reputation had always been closely tied in mercantile culture to the notion of social duty. It was through enacting *dharma* that business firms and families achieved their places of credit and status. Failure to fulfill one's duty, on the other hand, could bring stigmatization and even social ostracism. In redefining *dharma* so that it would pertain to the national arena, the Gandhians essentially preserved this linkage. They invoked the vocabulary of honor and shame in spurring local residents to abandon their nonassociation with public politics. In soliciting money for national primary schools, they appealed to the traders' sense of *abru* (reputation), which had always depended upon the willingness to donate material resources to sacred causes.[51] They stressed that the boycott of provincial elections and other forms of noncooperation with government were matters of personal and national self-respect (*swaman*).[52] They suggested that the arrest of Indian leaders was an insult (*apman*) to the people of Surat.[53] And they insisted over and over again that wearing or not wearing *khadi* was a matter of honor or shame.[54]

Through such language, the noncooperators created a cognitive association between the idea of involvement in Congress politics and the local preoccupation with respectability. Like other Gandhian "metaphors," this motif accomplished two persuasive objectives. It promoted a sense of identification with country by suggesting that family honor and shame were dependent upon noncooperation—that is, it brought the vocabulary of credit and honor into the realm of civic politics. At the same time, it injected matters of national significance into the local politics of reputation. Members of Brahman-Vaniya society could now bring their credit and respectability within Surat into doubt by voting

in provincial elections, by sending their children to government-funded schools, or by failing to wear *khadi* on public occasions. Those who did not observe Gandhian strictures might become subject to serious social sanctions similar to those faced by persons who had violated the injunctions of a *mahajan* or caste organization.

Evocation of shame became a regular theme in public speeches. As in the polemic of Hindu religious teachers, the leaders of noncooperation regularly berated their audiences for failure to observe expected behavioral standards. Asking attendees at one meeting to throw their foreign caps into a bonfire, Kunvarji Mehta commented: "It is sad to observe that, in this city, where there are so many learned persons, black caps [i.e., foreign-made caps] can be seen, while in villages with populations of ten thousand people not a single black cap is in sight."[55] On the anniversary of Tilak's death, Dr. Dixit similarly criticized those dressed in foreign clothes, suggesting that this behavior disgraced the memory of the deceased leader: "Those who have respect for Lokamanya Tilak should wear *khadi*. . . . I am ashamed that even in today's meeting, some individuals are wearing foreign caps which are simply a sign of slavery upon our heads."[56] When Vallabhbhai Patel, Gandhi's most important lieutenant, visited Surat in 1921, he devoted nearly his entire public speech to criticisms of local citizens for failure to live up to his wide-ranging moral expectations, including political fearlessness and the willingness to adopt *khadi*, abstain from drink, and contribute large amounts of money to the Tilak Swaraj Fund.[57] While to outsiders to Gujarati culture, this aspect of the Gandhian appeal might seem quite unappealing, local residents often responded strongly to such speeches, for instance, by contributing their foreign caps and cloth to bonfires or by coming forward to donate money to various Congress funds.

Playing upon gender sensitivities and identities was also very much part of the nationalist rhetoric. In August 1921, Kunvarji Mehta pricked the masculine sense of pride and called upon female concerns with family honor when he lectured a crowd on *swadeshi:* "If, as in ancient times, when the Rajput women did not let men return home from battle unless they had achieved victory, today's women would not let their men into their homes if they did not wear pure *khadi*, then . . . everyone would certainly consider it his duty to wear *khadi*."[58] Manibehn Patel (Vallabhbhai's daughter) prodded female sensibilities in scolding an audience of women in 1922: "It's shameful that there are marriages with foreign clothes. Though some khadi weddings have occurred, these are very few . . . . When our brothers go to jail why don't we feel as if we have been struck on our own chests? They undergo tremendous difficulties while you just engage in various pleasures (*mojshokh*)."[59]

Of course, repeated resort to this sort of persuasive technique was risky. The boundary between shaming a potential follower into action and insulting him or her was a fine one. When enthusiasm for noncooperation began to wane in 1923 and 1924, the Gandhians, still certain that they were on the right path to truth, drew increasingly on the shame motif in hopes of restirring the Surtis into action. Instead the effort backfired, intensifying the emotional distance of local residents from the movement.

Renunciation, Sacrifice, and Purification (tyag, bhog, balidan, *and* atmashuddhi)

At the core of the idea of noncooperation were the ascetic notion of renunciation (*tyag*) and the devotional concept of sacrifice (*bhog*). The central acts of noncooperation—the resignation of titles, the boycott of legislative councils, courts, and government schools, the abandonment of foreign cloth—were all described by Gandhi in renunciatory terms. Local followers of the Mahatma, too, drew upon this vocabulary with considerable frequency. "Khadify the country and renounce (*tyag karva*) foreign cloth," one urged.[60] "It is necessary," pleaded a major Congress leader, using the rhyming phraseology of Vallabhacharya devotionalism so often invoked during these years, "to continue devoting our bodies, mind and wealth (*tan, man, ane dhan*) in service (*seva*) to our country."[61] "You and everyone in India need to be ready to sacrifice (*bhog apva*) everything," insisted Vallabhbhai Patel on his visit, "in order to obtain independence."[62] "The struggle against municipal taxes is an oblation (*balidan*) to the country," asserted M. K. Dixit in early 1923, a time when government had begun to seize the property of recalcitrant taxpayers.[63]

By invoking the vocabulary of Hindu-Jain asceticism and worship, the Gandhians hoped to foster an attitude of religious intensity that would overcome the aversion of most Surtis to political risk taking. Employing the renunciation motif was a means of encouraging selflessness in the face of very real potential sacrifices. One's property, one's children's education, and even one's employment were characterized—at least metaphorically—as worldly attachments which might have to be given up for the sake of higher spiritual-national goals. As a teacher at a national girls' high school stated: "Children and wealth are not necessary for the attainment of immortality; only renunciation is needed."[64] By suggesting that religious principles of the highest order were at stake, noncooperators also provided participants with a sense of moral ascendancy over the British, who were portrayed in profane and worldly terms. Renunciatory rhetoric thus contributed mightily to undermining imperial authority and to promoting a willingness to confront government. The obscure logic of constitutionalism could hardly

move residents to confront the state in the manner these powerful appeals made possible.

Closely related to the theme of renunciation was the concept of self-purification (*atmashuddhi*). In classical Hindu philosophy, acts of renunciation and penance (*tapasya*) were techniques of purification. Through self-suffering, one freed oneself from attachments to the body and the material world, which were responsible for impurity. Local Gandhians, following the Mahatma's example, repeatedly drew upon the vocabulary of purity and pollution in describing *satyagraha* and the sacrifices that came with it as steps leading toward an internal self-cleansing. Students who chose not to take their matriculation examinations at government schools, too, were performing penance (*prayaschit*).[65] If women awoke to the cause of patriotism, argued Gunavantbehn Ghia, the leading female noncooperator in Surat, then "men with a purified spirit (*pavitra bhav*) would become the disciples (*chelas*) of Gandhi [and participate in the national struggle]."[66] At one meeting, a Jain priest from a local shrine sermonized: "At first you may not really like wearing khadi since you may find it rough and ugly in appearance, but [with time] its internally purifying (*antarshuddhi karvavali*) character will make the thoughts of your mind pure (*pavitra*)."[67] Ritually, this theme was symbolized by the purificatory baths that often preceded public meetings and processions.

The idiom of purity and pollution further encouraged nonattachment to family and worldly possessions that might inhibit the willingness to engage in bold action.[68] Here again, there was sometimes an effort to preempt the possibility of noninvolvement. In an astonishing speech in Surat during the height of the noncooperation movement, Vallabhbhai Patel warned: "If you don't do your duty because you think someone else would do it [for you], you will have to bear the consequences of your impure action."[69] Use of the purity motif suggested a whole series of political conclusions: that the continued acceptance of British rule polluted India and its people, that wearing foreign clothes or continued participation in legislative councils and government-funded schools was a worldly attachment that perpetuated impurity, and that undoing India's condition of impurity required acts of penance (much as an individual who violated caste strictures might have to undergo a series of purificatory rites). Noncooperators regularly stressed the atonement and self-purification that would accrue to those who distanced themselves from colonial institutions and commitments. In the speech that led to his arrest, Dayalji had suggested that if the people of Surat were successful in ousting the British, "then we would atone (*prayaschit kari le*) to a certain extent for the sins (*pap*) our ancestors committed due to the lack of foresightedness."[70]

In Surat's antiliquor movement, the boundary between militant protest and efforts to promote social purification completely disappeared. This was a campaign designed both to hurt government revenues—which depended upon the sale of liquor-shop contracts and a sales tax on alcohol—and to eliminate drinking, deemed unclean and socially denigrating to Surat and India. Kunvarji Mehta and several other ashramites, following the example of religious reformers who had preached temperance in Gujarat for centuries, encouraged local groups of low status, particularly in the countryside, to abandon drink and thus to adopt the norms of Brahman-Vaniya society.[71] In Surat itself, the noncooperators organized picketing at government auctions of liquor-shop contracts, pleading to bidders: "Give up sinful money, depend on money that is pure."[72] At the 1921 auctions, a band of 175 picketers marched on the collectorate, forcing the bidders to wait inside for hours. Most of the tenders offered during the years of noncooperation were substantially below earlier bids.[73]

Mythological Motifs

Analogies to myth, particularly to the great Hindu epics of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* were a fourth feature of the rhetoric of Gandhians during the period between 1920 and 1924. Repeatedly likening the trials and tribulations of mythological figures to the difficulties facing India in the twentieth century, the noncooperators attempted to create a sense that the people of India and Surat were living in a time that required extraordinary actions. If the country was going through a moment in its history analogous to those experienced by the greatest heroes in the most sacred of Hindu texts, they insisted, then to do nothing was preposterous. Dayalji Desai, the most adept of local noncooperators in creating mythological metaphor, regularly drew upon the epics in his appeals to public gatherings. In a meeting in 1922, for example, he alluded to the *Ramayana* in stressing the urgency of political action: "When Lord Ramchandraji was ready to go to paradise, he called the people of Ayodhya and said to them: 'Whoever wants to come with me should prepare themselves and bathe in the Ganges.' Not a single person was left behind. Similarly Mahatma Gandhi is now inviting you (*avahan kare chhe*) to independence, saying 'come with me.' If we do not go with him now, the time will never come again."[74]

Such arguments again attempted to eliminate the possibility of aloofness from the Congress cause. They provided those ready to make sacrifices for the nation with a sense of involvement in a privileged, sacred, and magical moment on a historical scale that reached back into mythological time. They also isolated those who remained apathetic or

who opposed noncooperation as obstacles to the creation of a new society of mythical proportions.

Mythological metaphor also contributed to drawing the lines between right and wrong in the contemporary struggle in particularly stark terms. In one of his most powerful speeches, Kalyanji Mehta defined the government as a modern Ravana (the demonic villain of the *Ramayana*) while terming noncooperation itself an *avatar* (incarnation) of Ram.[75] One local journalist, urging Surti citizens to join the movement, likened the role of the people to that of the army of monkeys that had helped Ram defeat Ravana.[76] Others paralleled the current struggle to the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the two archopponents of the *Mahabharata,* implicitly associating the British with the former and the nationalists with the latter.[77] The repeated references to the struggle as a *dharmik yuddh* (religious war) also made unmistakable allusions to the martial character of the two epic works and left little doubt which side was in the right.

When the movement began to lose momentum, recourse to mythology became an important method of attempting to restir confidence in eventual victory. After Gandhi was arrested, Kalyanji in one meeting during July 1922 first praised the Mahatma for his willingness to go to jail for the country, then reminded attendees that Krishna, the *Mahabharata*'s hero, had also undergone a whole series of tribulations before achieving his final success.[78] On another occasion, Pragji Khandubhai Desai told stories of Rana Pratap, a king of North Indian legend and history, who had similarly experienced great trials before gaining his throne.[79]

Finally, myth set before the Surtis the ideals of courage and commitment that were needed for success. Since this theme leads into the question of how the noncooperators constructed Gandhi himself, I turn now to examine the metaphors involved in the making of the Mahatma.

The Mahatma (darshan *and* man)

Gandhi undoubtedly was the most powerful of all symbols in the noncooperation movement. As we have seen, the Mahatma already enjoyed a reputation as a person of special qualities in the city years before his direct involvement in Congress affairs. But Gandhi's charisma was not simply inherent in his personality; it was a cultural construct, and like all cultural constructs, it needed to be reproduced over and over again in order to maintain itself. Local noncooperators astutely recognized the tremendous potential appeal the Mahatma carried for the Surtis and repeatedly drew upon and reinforced his saintly, almost supernatural image.[80]

The most effective mode of tapping the Mahatma's authority was to bring him to the city. Kalyanji, Dayalji, and Kunvarji tried to convince Gandhi to visit Surat as frequently as possible. These visits—a half dozen between 1919 and 1922—were occasions for a tremendous outpouring of popular emotion. Thousands would struggle to gain the Mahatma's *darshan* at the train station or at public meetings. The ashramites in the city paid great attention to Gandhi's program in order to give him the greatest possible exposure. His tour of Surat usually involved lengthy processions, frequent garlanding at strategic points along his route, addresses by the municipality and public associations, openings of *khadi* shops and national schools, speeches to groups of women and students, huge public meetings, and a number of smaller events both to project Gandhi's greatness and to capitalize upon it. Local newspapers—both Gandhian and non-Gandhian—recorded the events that occurred during his stay in copious detail. Even the *Gujarat Mitra,* with its moderate reputation, ran articles that strengthened Gandhi's image, referring to the Mahatma on one occasion as "the matchless soul-renouncer and practitioner of penance" and as an "avatar of Harishchandra."[81]

When Gandhi was not physically on the scene, the noncooperators made sure that he was present symbolically. They organized innumerable occasions to pay him homage. "Gandhi days" became monthly events after the Mahatma was arrested in 1922. Perhaps the most remarkable celebration devoted to the Mahatma was a Gandhi *jayanti* (anniversary of a great person) held in October 1921. Noncooperators announced their intention to model the occasion specifically after Divali, the most important holiday of the Hindu calendar. Long before the celebration, local tailors had been set to work preparing *khadi* clothes for participants. When the propitious day arrived, citizens awoke early to gather in the city square. Municipal councillors distributed sweetmeats to thousands of children enrolled in the national schools, who had been granted a day off from their classrooms. The gathering then proceeded through the streets of the city, symbolically escorting two large carts that carried framed pictures of Gandhi, one with a spinning wheel to which *puja* had been performed, the other covered with *khadi* cloth. The huge procession—so long that it was impossible to see from one end to the other on the bending city streets—traveled through neighborhood after neighborhood, with residents shouting praises of Gandhi, garlanding his picture, and depositing foreign clothes on the carts as the procession moved on. Householders and shopkeepers hung banners carrying nationalist slogans and wreaths bedecked with pictures of the Mahatma outside their homes and shops. At the Jhampa Bazaar, a bonfire of foreign caps was held. Finally after nearly four

hours the procession ended up back in the city square. One elderly man later told Dr. Dixit that in his eighty years he had never seen such a procession.[82]

The public speeches associated with such occasions often focused more on reciting Gandhi's virtuous qualities than on criticizing British rule or colonial policy. On the evening of the *jayanti,* for instance, Dayalji gave a lengthy eulogy to the Mahatma:

> If there is any principle that has been especially impressive in Gandhi's life, it is that he has given up any sense of his own ego (*hunpanun*). He has no attachments (*mamatva*) for anything of the household or the world, but is attached simply to doing service (*seva*) for the public (*jansamaj*) and for God. Today every caste pays homage to him (*temne man ape chhe*). He possesses no less compassion (*daya*) or self-control (*tap*) than the best Brahman; no less bravery than a Kshatriya; his Vaishya-like wisdom has gone into every act we have undertaken up to this point; and he possesses devotion to service like a Shudra. . . . We should take full advantage of the fact that we have been granted such a great person as our leader after a period of many hundreds of years. If we put aside our duty, then it will be considered a great mistake.[83]

Shivaram Iyer, principal of a national girls' school in Surat, employed metaphors with particular resonances for women in offering speech of praise to the Mahatma:

> The kind of devotion (*bhakti*) and inclination for service (*seva*) that a chaste and dutiful wife has toward her husband is the kind of devotion and inclination that Gandhi has toward the motherland. As the greedy think of money all the time, so Gandhi thinks of service all the time; just as a mother worries about the welfare of her child, so Gandhi worries about the condition of lakhs of people both day and night; the root of all these qualities is renunciation (*tyag*).[84]

Noncooperators frequently told stories from Gandhi's life as illustrations of his greatness. Often these took on a mythical quality or assumed the aura of morality tales. Dayalji especially liked to relate incidents from Gandhi's childhood while illustrating the qualities he believed local citizens should possess. In a speech he gave in April 1922, for instance, he likened the youth of Gandhi to that of the hero of the *Ramayana:*

> Just as Ramchandraji was an ideal son, ideal father, king and householder, and was without equal in ingenuity and bravery, so Mahatma Gandhi, from his childhood, has also developed his character extraordinarily in every possible direction. His equals are Christ and Buddha from thousands of years ago. No other equal may come for another two thousand years. The foremost mantra of his life is *satya.* Even from childhood he has been an observer of truth. When he was studying in high school,

> he ate meat on one or two occasions due to the company of bad friends. When he came home he told his mother that he was not going to eat. When she asked why, he couldn't tell her the truth. As a result, he thought, why should I do things that I can't be truthful about with my mother?[85]

Such language served several political ends simultaneously. First, it reconfirmed Gandhi's specialness in the eyes of Surtis, perpetuating his reputation as a leader of tremendous stature. The noncooperators furnished residents with a sense of privilege in having such an extraordinary leader. In fashioning Gandhi into the Mahatma, they attempted to render his authority superior to that of either the British or the established leaders of public life and thus break the hold of deference that these figures exerted. Congress leaders regularly exhorted Surtis to "pay respect (*man apo*)" to Gandhi or to "follow the mantra" of the Mahatma when they appealed for support for wearing khadi, boycotting government-funded schools, or abstaining from provincial elections.[86] At times noncooperators suggested that Gandhi's claims to the support of his followers were inviolable. Stated Manibehn Patel at a meeting after Gandhi's arrest: "If you have any feelings about the ruin of our country and about the hardships that the Mahatma has to bear, if you consider Gandhi like a revered god (*pujya dev*), then you should do what he feels is important."[87]

Second, this language provided models of political behavior for the Surtis to emulate. Noncooperators considered Gandhi to embody in saintly form all the qualities they were asking local citizens to adopt in their public behavior: truth, renunciation, penance, and devotion. Each resident of the city, by striving to fashion him- or herself in the image of the Mahatma, could also work toward personal self-perfection and national liberation. While describing Gandhi's charismatic qualities, local congress leaders were often suggesting very concrete courses of action for local residents to take, actions that involved taking on some of the Mahatma's virtues.

Third, praise of Gandhi constituted a claim of the local noncooperators, as the chief interpreters of his message, to the allegiance of the citizenry. Establishing reputations as disciples of the Mahatma was critical to the perpetuation of the Gandhians' own authority. Because the noncooperators devoted so much of their symbolic activity to making such a claim, the motif of discipleship and devotee, too, requires further examination.

Followership (chelas, bhakti, sanyasis, satyagrahis, sevaks)

Noncooperators consciously cultivated self-images as devotees of the Mahatma. In their public work, they regularly referred to themselves as *chelas* (disciples) of Gandhi who were intensely committed to their

spiritual teacher. This imagery was explicitly set forth in one of Kalyanji's poems, "We Satyagrahi *Chelas*."

We are the satyagrahi *chelas* of the guru Gandhiji;
Ready to die are we, for the sake of preserving our vow.
Gandhi has given the mantra by which we all must live and die;
We all should transcend our difficulties, and never fear the suffering.[88]

One way in which the ashramites embodied the role of devotee was through the organization of *bhajan mandalis*, small groups which would travel around the city singing songs of praise to Gandhi and of commitment to the nationalist cause, much in the same vein as adherents to Vallabhacharya or Swaminarayan devotionalism. Residents at the Patidar Ashram in fact take credit for originating the idea of *prabhat feris* (morning rounds) of *bhajan* singers that later became part of the general Congress repertoire all over India. Kalyanji Mehta would gather urban youth and students living in the Anavil and Patidar ashrams early in the morning, then would lead the group through the city to wake residents with their singing. Their songs generally were written in the style of traditional devotional hymns but contained considerable nationalist content. Kalyanji himself wrote a number of songs delineating the central values involved in the struggle.[89]

Noncooperators also took on the role of followers of a great religious figure through acts of renunciation that suggested a willingness to absorb themselves in the way of life advocated by their leader. A single act of sacrifice, such as resignation from government service, could instantly elevate a person to leadership among local Gandhians, as in the cases of Champaklal Ghia and Sayyid Ahmed Edrus.[90] Others went even further by fashioning themselves as political *sannyasis* ready to perform selfless service for their people and their country. In 1920, at a Congress gathering in the nearby city of Bharuch, Dayalji and Kalyanji both informed Gandhi that they were ready to dedicate their lives to the nation.[91] They donated all their personal wealth to the Tilak Swaraj Fund as an expression of their commitment to the Mahatma. Dayalji, whose wife had died several years earlier, became recognized as a *brahmachari* (celibate person) with special ascetic powers. Both leaders further simplified the lives of students at their ashrams as they converted these institutions into symbolic centers of nationalist politics.

Most of the Gandhians ennobled self-sacrifice in their words and their actions. Kalyanji, drawing heavily upon the nautical imagery prevalent in *bhakti* hymns, expressed an intense willingness to undergo suffering for the sacred cause in one of the most effective of his poems:

We are the servants of India, we carry the banner of *satya*.
Against oppressive injustice, we hold our heads up high.

Let there be rains of oppression, let daggers pierce our hearts.
We leave our cares for the dream world, for the sake of our native land.

The multitudes of slaves believe in the laws of slavery.
Even in temples of God they accept slavery's fetters.
But we are the *chelas* of Christ and Gautam Buddha.
We will throw ourselves before the cannon balls.

Let the seven seas swell with the fire from below.
Seizing the oars of truth, we have sailed upon the high seas.
Our guides are Gandhi and Shraddhanand Swamiji.
Navigating by the pole star, we will steer our ship to safety. . . .

If we die fighting with truth, the door is open to heaven.
If we live and win in the end, falsehood will be confined to hell.
Effortlessly, the roaring cannons will stop.
And our chains will be broken by the spirit of our truth-penance.

What care have we of death from prison torture?
Brave men in the battle of truth have not heard the word *defeat*.
Awakening from our ashes, armies of armies will arise.
From every drop of blood, brave sons will be born.

From the force of our fierce penance, the black stones will melt.
Showers of heart-felt love will extinguish the burning world.[92]

The ultimate expression of renunciation and penance was to undergo imprisonment for the national cause. Those who willingly performed the *jailyatra* (pilgrimage to jail) rose quickly in prominence and power in local public life. When Dayalji was arrested in 1922, huge crowds gathered to see him off to prison. Speakers at a huge meeting after his arrest praised him for his *atmabal* (soul force) and termed his arrest a *deshyagna* (*desh* = country; *yagna* = sacrificial rite).[93] The noncooperators' newspaper, *Navayug,* eulogized Desai in words that conflated the imagery of nationalism with that of Hinduism: "O son born of a heroic mother, who having imbibed the teaching of the guru, Gandhiji, to destroy the depraved power in the country, and having fully realized the principles of non-violence and love of humanity, offered the sacrifice of self to the tyrannical administration."[94]

When Kalyanji was arrested on the day of Dayalji's release a year later, the same newspaper addressed the Patidar leader in a similar vein: "O you dweller in the jail, who have met the deadly dagger of 124-A [the statute under which Kalyanji was arrested], with a smiling face and naked breast. When the lion of Gujarat [Dayalji] returns today, go to the place of all divine avatars from Lord Sri Krishna to Mahatma Gandhi [i.e., jail]. Is not that temple of salvation dearer than bearing the cutthroat system of administration."[95]

In drawing upon devotional and renunciatory motifs as they defined their own political identities, the noncooperators laid claim to an au-

thority that they believed superseded the profane conception of civic leadership. They offered to the Surtis a new model of the public servant—that of *satyagrahi,* a person who did not make sharp distinctions between personal and political morality, and who immersed him- or herself totally in the struggle for social justice and human welfare without thought of personal gain. In theory, such public workers were free from commitments to colonial institutions and to principles which inhibited India from reaching a more complete national liberation. Thus, for the noncooperators, the process of self-legitimation was interconnected with the effort to decolonize public culture and to define a new political order.

Taken together, these six rhetorical motifs contributed greatly to the subversion of political conceptions that had ruled municipal and national politics before 1918. But by positing a single overarching set of values through this syncretic language, the Gandhians were also challenging the dominance of the patron-client idiom that had been successfully used by dominant public figures in cultivating the support of local citizens. In short, they sought to end the politics of bilingualism, to erase linguistic barriers between the inner and outer domains of politics that obstructed the genuine participation of Surat's residents in public life.

CONCLUSION

The ability of Surat's Gandhians to free themselves from the constraints of established forms of political discourse stemmed to a great extent from the very different relations they sought to develop with their two relevant audiences, the Anglo-Indian ruling group and the residents of Surat. As men and women with no previous experience working in colonial institutions, they had never developed commitments to the principles and assumptions of civic politics. In reaching positions of power, they—unlike the urban leaderships before them—had little interest in bargaining with the civil administrators of the district or the province. They instead wished to embarrass and expose the colonial rulers. Thus, in their speeches and their actions, the Gandhians showed little hesitation in openly violating the standards of decorum accepted by Britishers and elite politicians alike. At the same time, believing that only massive participation in acts of noncooperation could bring colonial rule to an end, they genuinely sought to bring Surat's underclasses fully into the civic arena. The Gandhians generated a powerful oratory that rendered civic politics accessible and emotive to the Surtis, providing them with a sense of meaning and identity in the national struggle. Through recourse to indigenous notions of duty,

shame and honor, renunciation and purity, leadership and followership, they sought to create among the city's residents a feeling that their moral self-worth was inextricably tied to involvement in the noncooperation movement.

The Gandhians thus were able to create a genuine alternative to the idiom and political principles that had sustained the civic order in Surat before 1918, one that reflected a serious effort at the decolonization of local culture. Their syncretic idiom smashed the usual presumptions inherent in the established discourses of power; it demystified public politics for many citizens by infusing into the rhetoric of the civic arena a potent indigenous vocabulary. It thus came to inform a powerful movement against British rule that drew thousands of residents into its fold.

Yet, ultimately, Gandhian discourse failed to supplant completely either the older public discourse from the civic arena or precolonial idioms from the city's inner arenas. Indeed, by 1925, Gandhian politics had temporarily run its course; the politics of bilingualism had been effectively restored. Only traces of the rhetoric of noncooperation remained in local politics. Control over the civic arena was reassumed by elite politicians who operated within liberal democratic discourse and who concerned themselves more with influencing the ruling group than with mobilizing the larger population. The colonial hegemony returned to the city, in part because of defects that had always been present in noncooperation, in part because of hidden strengths in colonial rule.

ELEVEN

The Restoration of Hegemony

At the height of noncooperation, nationalist claims that India could attain *swaraj* in the very near future must not have seemed farfetched to many residents of Surat. Local Gandhians had shaken the civil order repeatedly by boycotting provincial elections, by seizing power in the local municipality and turning the council into an instrument of national education, and by organizing a no-tax campaign that effectively paralyzed the Committee of Management. Huge, *khadi*-clad crowds regularly gathered by the banks of the Tapi whenever Congress leaders visited the city, creating an atmosphere of near millennial expectations. The support of Muslims and Hindus for each others' causes within this vast movement seemed to defy British claims that the two communities were incompatible. Seemingly Gandhian rhetoric had brought about a major shift in conceptions of politics at both an elite and a popular level. Surtis may not have been certain about what kind of new world they were creating, but they seemed sure that they were bringing an end to the old one.

Yet by 1925 noncooperation had collapsed. The underclasses slowly abandoned the movement, leaving a Congress leadership still committed to the attainment of *swaraj* but divided on how that goal was to be reached. The most critical section of this leadership decided that national objectives could be obtained only by a return to self-governing institutions—the provincial legislature and the municipality—and to the constitutional idiom associated with these institutions. Bilingual politics were restored, with subaltern groups deprived of access to the public arena except as dependents of those elite figures able to manage the subtleties of constitutional politics. Most ominously for Gandhian ideals, Hindu-Muslim unity broke down, leaving members of both communities with a heightened sense of religious consciousness and with a

determination to get their rightful share of political spoils, if need be at the expense of each other.

The ultimate failure of Gandhian principle in becoming accepted as a dominant political logic and the renewed importance of public and communalist reasoning stemmed largely from the resilience of the imperial order. While the formal power of British administrators had been considerably reduced as a result of political reforms undertaken during and after World War I, colonialism still maintained a pervasive, often invisible, influence over urban society. Local life and politics had become so bound up with institutions associated with British rule that most residents of the city were unwilling to cut themselves off from these institutions entirely. As Surtis carried out their day-to-day political struggles within the structures of the Raj, they reinforced the ascendancy of a representative and a communal order, sometimes unwittingly. Through the political practice of the 1920s, languages of power appropriated from the colonial rulers consolidated themselves as "common sense," while Gandhian cultural meanings increasingly seemed "romantic" and "utopian."

UNDERCLASS WITHDRAWAL FROM NONCOOPERATION

The collapse of noncooperation resulted from three related but separable developments: (1) the underclass withdrawal from the movement, (2) an elite return to constitutional politics, and (3) the rise of communal politics and the growing feeling among Muslims of exclusion from the people and the nation. In this chapter, I explore the first two of these issues. The development of communalism will be the subject of the final chapter.

In order to understand why the Surtis drew away from noncooperation, it is first important to appreciate the character of popular involvement in Congress politics at the height of the movement. An examination of the nature of support for Congress between 1920 and 1923 reveals important strengths of noncooperation in the city, but it also exposes limitations in the nature of popular participation.

At the height of noncooperation, the nationalist leadership was extremely successful in involving large numbers of people in the politics of the civic arena for the first time. By making public politics accessible and emotive, by deflating the authority of the British and older urban elites, by creating an atmosphere of impending change, local Gandhians temporarily gave residents of extremely diverse social backgrounds a sense that areas of their lives that had increasingly slipped beyond their control were again manageable—given the proper forms of political action. Participation in the public sphere ceased to be simply an elite

or a high-caste phenomenon. To varying degrees, noncooperation embraced middle-caste residents as well as the Brahman-Vaniyas, artisans and petty traders as well as merchants and urban professionals, women and children as well as adult males. The movement even penetrated into some of the poorest and lowest-status communities in the city. Only two somewhat overlapping sectors of Surti society, the Parsis and government servants, held aloof.

One clear indicator of the success of the Gandhians lay in their short-term ability to oust their competitors from power. By the end of 1920, noncooperation had isolated the moderates and the home rulers. Both groups now stood outside the Congress, leaving control of the national organization entirely to those who supported the Calcutta program. In the municipal campaign of 1921 the noncooperators also achieved total victory. This election, the first in which all twenty-seven thousand urban taxpayers were eligible to vote, gave thirty-seven of forty elected seats to the Swarajya Sabha. Only two Parsis running in predominantly Parsi areas and Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta, the stalwart moderate who sought election in a ward populated largely by government employees and pensioners, won seats from outside the Gandhian ranks. A municipal sweeper of untouchable background, Jamushankar Bhangi, aroused considerable local curiosity after he announced his candidacy and pledged his commitment to the Congress program. But without the backing of the Swarajya Sabha, his campaign was a hopeless cause—he received only seven votes on polling day.

For their part, the noncooperators conducted a novel campaign, issuing a general invocation (*avahan*) to the pubiic to attend the polls. They did not visit houses individually or fetch voters in private conveyances as had been the practice in previous elections. Those running on the Congress platform were placed on the ticket for various wards almost randomly, with no serious thought given to their social connections in particular neighborhoods. The traditional style of conducting campaigns through friends, kinsfolk, and caste fellows was temporarily abandoned. Despite these departures from earlier practice, the candidates of the Swarajya Sabha had little difficulty in gaining a huge majority on the municipal council.[1]

Electoral success, however, sheds little light on levels of sustained political participation or support. In order to develop a more satisfactory measure of popular involvement in noncooperation, we must consider a whole continuum of participatory behaviors, ranging from those that required low levels of commitment to those expressing intense commitments. In general, the Gandhians were very successful in securing support on the lower end of this continuum, but much less so at the higher.

The most apparent and dramatic shift in underclass participation during the noncooperation years was in attendance at public gatherings, particularly meetings and processions. The frequency of public meetings and the numbers present far outstripped the pre-Gandhian period. Noncooperators organized some occasion or other virtually every week between 1920 and 1923, in some cases more often. Prominent Congress leaders with special drawing power—Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankarlal Banker, the Ali brothers, and Gandhi himself—were coaxed to the city as frequently as possible. The large crowds at such occasions were certainly a sign of the enthusiasm, interest, and curiosity that ordinary Surtis held for Congress politics. Presence at meetings, moreover, frequently involved the expression of at least limited commitment to the movement and its leadership. One had to wear *khadi*—or subject oneself to intense criticism if one did not—and one had to be willing to endure the shame-oriented rhetoric of public speakers. Often audiences responded very concretely to the appeals of speakers by throwing their foreign caps and coats into the bonfires, by signing up as members of the Congress, or by subscribing to Congress funds.

In general, crowd figures averaged ten to twenty times higher during the noncooperation movement than during the home rule era, a time when no expectations—except perhaps of silence—had been placed on attendees. During 1921 and 1922, audiences at most city-wide observances attracted three to ten thousand people. When Gandhi came to Surat, of course, the numbers were much higher. On one of his visits, in October 1921, nearly a hundred thousand people from Surat and the surrounding district gathered at the Dakka Ovara to hear the Mahatma speak and gain his *darshan*. Describing the sea of *khadi*-clad Surtis present, one journalist wrote that it was "as if 88,000 Hindu holymen had seated themselves by the riverside to perform penance."[2]

Unfortunately, it is not possible to break down audiences at public meetings by neighborhood or caste. Given the huge size of some audiences, however, it is unlikely that they were composed only of high-caste or prosperous background. And certainly, middle-caste localities were almost as enthusiastic in welcoming processions through their streets as upper-caste neighborhoods. Available figures indicate that the numbers of males at public meetings usually ran about ten times greater than those of women. That several hundred women came to many meetings held by the Congress was itself evidence of a significant change in local public life, which had excluded females entirely before this time. But the inability of the noncooperators to conceive of a place for women beyond wearing and spinning *khadi* was a serious limitation. Later, during the civil disobedience movement of 1930–34, women did

achieve a somewhat more significant role as picketers and violators of salt laws.

Another novel feature of this period was the involvement of children in public gatherings. On days of national importance, the Rashtriya Kelavani Mandal would grant all primary-age children holidays so that they could join street processions. Thousands often did, adding to the impression of endlessness in the procession. But children, too, were not given the meaningful roles in noncooperation that they would acquire in civil disobedience, when *vanar senas* (monkey armies) were organized to boycott foreign toy and cloth shops and otherwise pester the local authorities.

In certain kinds of nonconfrontational protest symbolizing the struggle's spirit of renunciation, the Gandhians were also to secure widespread backing. True, no one in Surat chose to resign his title or to withdraw from the legal profession, but these were steps that only members of a tiny elite were in a position to undertake. Other campaigns of renunciatory resistance evoked quite extensive involvement. *Hartals*, or business closures, which the Gandhians regarded as acts of mourning, penance, and self-sacrifice, often elicited near-universal adherence. The *hartal* organized for the Rowlatt Satyagraha, for instance, involved nearly all Hindus in commerce, including prosperous merchants, petty traders, and artisans. Low-caste gardeners, milk sellers, and vegetable hawkers were among those refusing to do business. Even the Machhis, lowly fish sellers living in abject poverty, joined the *hartal*. Among some of these communities, old group organizations enforced participation. The *panch* of the barbers, for instance, threatened to fine barbers who served their clients on 6 April. A few horse-cart drivers, largely Muslims, remained on the streets, but the only significant sign of commercial activity was the trade of Parsi government contractors who ran liquor and opium shops.[3] During the boycott of the peace celebrations later that year, most traders in the city closed their establishments early and retired to their homes. The *Bombay Chronicle*, a pro-Gandhian newspaper, reported that the main roads of the city looked "almost like a desert,"[4] though it failed to note that many Parsis had kept their shops open and had participated in the celebrations; the Parsi Panchayat had even organized its own special festivities.[5]

The boycott of provincial elections in 1920, also championed as a meritorious act of self-denial, achieved extremely widespread compliance in Surat, albeit with an electorate that constituted only about one-fifth of the adult male population. The *Gujarat Mitra*, a progovernment newspaper, admitted that the boycott had "an appreciable hold on the mob" (i.e., those residents with little English education) but claimed

that the "enlightened section of the citizens"—notables, government servants, and educated professionals—generally attended the polls.[6] The Gandhians organized an extremely effective campaign against the councils, holding public meetings and disseminating handbills widely in the city. They also convinced many middle-caste headmen to impose penalties on community members who attended the polls.[7] As a result, only a small fraction of the eligible Hindus, Jains, and Muslims voted. In non-Muslim wards, only 20 percent of the electorate cast votes; almost a third of these were Parsis, who turned out in large numbers, almost winning a position in the Bombay legislature for their candidate, Jamshedji Antia.[8] However, Hindu and Jain government servants and pensioners, who also voted in large numbers, generally threw their support behind Chunilal Gandhi, a moderate and former government lawyer, allowing him to edge out Antia. Neither Antia nor Gandhi would have had much chance to win if not for the boycott.[9]

The most sustained campaigns of the noncooperation period centered on the movement to nationalize local education. After the Bombay administration wrested control of municipal schools from the noncooperating councillors, the Gandhians urged residents to withdraw their children from government-controlled primary schools and to enroll them in schools started up by the Rashtriya Kelavani Mandal. This, too, was described as an act of renunciation. At one point, in early 1922, only 796 of roughly eight thousand potential primary school students were in attendance at the government schools.[10] Different social groups tended to comply with the directives of the local Congress in different ways. While high-caste residents sent their sons and daughters to the national schools, children from artisan and petty-trading families more often than not chose to attend no schools at all. Many families of low and middle status took advantage of the inability of local government to enforce the Universal and Compulsory Primary Education Act by putting their children back to work in their shops and small factories. So while five thousand students filled classrooms of the national schools, nearly three thousand children between six and twelve abstained from any formal education whatsoever.[11]

Most of the money needed to fund the national schools came from local traders. Contributions to national education and other Congress causes often helped local merchants advance their familial prestige and the status of their occupational groups, much as they had achieved the same ends through donations to support temples and holy men in the past. Nationalist rhetoric was successful in stressing the gains to family *abru* that would ensue from munificence and in casting the Rashtriya Kelavani Mandal as a sacred focus for mercantile gift giving. Local merchants responded to this appeal by giving thousands of rupees to

the Congress organization, allowing it to maintain primary schools for almost five thousand students over several years. Perceiving donations to the Congress as critical to their core values—their religion and their credit—many local merchants found a way to express their dissatisfactions with government policy they could easily reconcile with their own charitable traditions. A number of occupational *mahajans*, including those of the cotton merchants, grain dealers, and grain merchants, contributed their *lagos* (cesses), traditionally raised for the support of temples and animal hospitals, to the *mandal.*[12] Some contributed money on particularly auspicious occasions such as the marriages of their sons or daughters and the visits of the great nationalists.[13] Gifts of ornaments and other personal objects became commonplace at public meetings. Clearly the Gandhians were quite effective in forging a cognitive connection between mercantile ethics and financial support for the nationalist cause.

The most powerful challenge to government came in the no-tax movement against the Committee of Management, appointed by the provincial administration after it had suspended the noncooperating municipal council in early 1921. As soon as the committee assumed power, local Gandhians called for a halt to all forms of support for the new municipality, asking all residents to refuse to pay any direct taxes to the local body. In a population that had always offered widespread but usually uncoordinated resistance to municipal taxation, this call evoked a powerful response. Twenty-two of twenty-six thousand citizens on the tax rolls refused to submit their payments, showing their resentment toward the huge increases in direct taxation over the previous decade. Though no effective campaign could be organized against *octroi* collections, municipal revenues as a whole fell by nearly 50 percent. In order to maintain any civic services, the committee was forced to hire special officers to seize property from refractory ratepayers. Several hundred seizures took place. Tax collections returned to normal only after two years. Some arrears were never recovered.[14]

All these forms of popular involvement marked a significant departure from the traditional style of civic politics, which had previously required that residents of the city rely on their representatives to take up their concerns. Thousands of residents had engaged in the protests associated with noncooperation, viewing their actions as contributions to a larger movement intended to bring an end to colonial rule. The rationale for participation may have varied from group to group. One suspects that many merchants perceived involvement as a mode of raising their familial prestige and credit, and that members of middle-status groupings, often employing preexisting organizations, may have viewed noncooperation as an opportunity to promote the status of their

entire community. But for all these sections of society, noncooperation seemed an opportunity to overcome their past exclusion from civic politics. Armed with conceptual weapons for making sense of the public sphere, the Surtis were seemingly becoming genuine participants in shaping an alternative order.

Yet despite tremendous enthusiasm for certain aspects of noncooperation, the underclasses always maintained a certain distance from the nationalist leadership even during the most intense moments of struggle. In part this may be because they had been denied any truly creative role in the formulation of the movement's plans and ideology. In contrast to the "mass line" of Mao's revolutionary theory, the Gandhian philosophy of action left limited scope for ideas and policies from below. In Surat, Gandhian principle was articulated largely by a few leaders who believed themselves to be the authoritative interpreters of the Mahatma's teachings. These leaders placed stringent moral controls over participants, such as nonviolence, abstinence from alcohol, and the renunciation of foreign cloth. Persons who departed from the central tenets of the ethical code, for instance, by engaging in petty acts of violence or by acting in an angry fashion at public meetings, risked censorship or ostracism. Dayalji Desai stressed the need for calm and quiet in virtually every public speech he gave during this period. Only certain kinds of actions, the chief leaders of the Congress clearly let their audiences know, could be allowed under noncooperation.[15]

Thus, though the Gandhian appeal struck powerful chords in local culture, it was never to develop the fully plebeian character that might have ensured its survival. Many residents of the city were hesitant to be absorbed in a form of politics that required its adherents to follow moral codes sent down from above. Response to different aspects of the Gandhian appeal varied considerably. In modes of resistance that involved little danger to their families or their livelihoods, the Surtis generally manifested very high degrees of involvement. But when association meant intense commitments, major sacrifices of group autonomy, or placing family well-being at serious risk, residents were very wary.

All forms of political involvement that generated widespread support in the city shared one feature: none required abandoning the low profile that local traders had previously tried to maintain in their politics. Many of the concrete forms that noncooperation adopted—business closings, withholding tax payments, and avoiding other obligations to government—were based upon well-established strategies of merchant resistance that now had assumed a collective form and had acquired a national and public character through association with Congress agitations. None involved a direct confrontation with government

that would place the artisan or merchant family firm seriously at risk. The one movement that directly and openly challenged colonial legal standards—the no-tax movement against the local municipality—quickly crumbled once the Committee of Management began to send its officers into local homes accompanied by policemen to seize silk clothing and other property. By late 1924, the committee had become so successful in making its collections that, much to its own surprise, it had been able to generate a revenue surplus (though there were considerable uncollected arrears).

In acts that required greater personal visibility, the residents of Surat were at best lukewarm. The Gandhians were particularly unsuccessful in recruiting activists from deep within local society. Only a couple of dozen persons took the oath of *satyagraha* during the Rowlatt movement. In May 1921, after Dayalji asked for two hundred volunteers to picket country liquor shops at a public meeting, just thirteen persons came forward.[16] The results were so disappointing that when the bidding for shop contracts began, Kunvarji had to bring in volunteers from the rural town of Bardoli. No doubt, many Surtis, particularly those living in poverty, derived great pleasure from drink and saw little need to support a drive toward purification that would take this pleasure away. But the difficulties in obtaining workers for Congress causes were not confined to the antiliquor campaign. When noncooperators attempted to form a more general corps of activists from the city in early 1922, only seventy-five persons signed up, in contrast to the nearly four thousand Kalyanji had enrolled in Bardoli. Most of these few volunteers came either from the rural students living at the two ashrams or from high-caste youth of high-school and college age.[17] Despite the urgings of the Gandhians, only a handful of local persons, all in positions of leadership, underwent imprisonment during the noncooperation period. And very few resigned government positions. The few who did, like Champaklal Ghia and Sayyid Ahmed Edrus, were elite figures with assured livelihoods and assured positions of political influence once they left their posts.[18] By contrast, clerks, policemen, and post-office workers were too dependent on income from government employment to risk this sort of dramatic step. Thus, perhaps the most effective form that a nonviolent campaign might have assumed in Surat—the refusal of the administration's own servants to continue their collaboration—never took shape.

The *swadeshi* campaign was also very mixed in its achievements. In late 1922, noncooperators organized a boycott campaign involving 139 picketers that prompted all the city's foreign cloth merchants, with the exception of a few Daudi Bohras, to sign a pledge not to sell foreign products for one year. Two months later, however, it was clear that

many cloth traders were continuing to sell foreign goods from their shops.[19] Most of the local citizenry never fully embraced the cause of *khadi*. All through the years of noncooperation, speakers at public meetings regularly berated local citizens for putting on homespun clothes only at meetings and in processions but then wearing foreign and millmade clothes at home and at work. The difficulties of the *khadi* campaign in Surat should have been readily apparent. In a city whose economic vitality depended upon marketing luxury textiles, and where textile manufacture depended heavily upon the import of foreign raw materials and the export of finished products, complete acceptance of the Gandhian creed on cloth would have been remarkable. The local economy had become so interlinked with the larger world economy that total absorption in *swadeshi* would have seriously endangered family security and well-being.

Though the scheme of national education undoubtedly achieved tremendous successes at its height, it, too, eventually ran aground. Government prosecutions of a few families with children in local schools for violation of the universal and compulsory act certainly had some effect. More significant, however, were the financial problems of the national schools. Cut off from public sources of revenue after the suspension of the noncooperating municipality, the Rashtriya Kelavani Mandal depended upon steady and permanent private contributions. Once the Committee of Management became effective in collecting direct cesses, residents who continued to support the Rashtriya schools found themselves paying double taxation for the schooling of the city's children. Not surprisingly, contributions began to dwindle by 1924, with adverse effects on the standards of primary education. The teachers, restless about poor pay and working conditions in the institutions of national education, gradually returned to the government-funded schools. The *Gujarat Mitra* sarcastically suggested that the problem had become so serious that "even ladies who had served as water women in the national schools were turned into [school] mistresses."[20] Slowly upper-caste families began sending their children back to the municipal schools. Education had simply become too important a matter in colonial Surat for business and service families to risk doing without it. Jobs in the post office, railways, and administration depended on schooling, and without literacy, no businessman could hope to survive in a world where commerce increasingly involved dealings with bureaucracy. Thus, with no clear vision of how the livelihoods of urban dwellers could be sustained without the abilities acquired in existing schools, the Gandhian campaign was bound to run into difficulties. By 1925, when the Congress came back to power in the local municipality, even the staunchest noncooperators began to recognize the practical problems

of national education. Led by Dr. Dixit, the local body merged the old municipal schools and the new Rashtriya schools and accepted government funding and supervision.

These cases are merely illustrative of how the dependence of local residents upon colonial institutions eventually undid noncooperation. The saturation of the colonial order in Surat's social life, of course, extended far beyond these few examples. Local bankers now obtained credit from imperial banks; exporters required the cooperation of port authorities; businessmen needed licenses and the use of railway wagons; artisans clamored for the new public utility company to provide electricity in their neighborhoods so that they could mechanize household factories. Many householders relied on the courts in pursuing conflicts over property, commerce, and the use of urban space. As long as the Congress showed little sign of constructing an alternative political system to undermine colonial structures, most residents were simply not ready to persist in forms of social protest that could endanger family statuses and livelihoods.

Gandhian cultural meanings, which in their fullest senses challenged these structures completely, failed to assume the status of a new hegemony. To many residents, no doubt, wholesale embrace of the principles espoused by Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj* was hopelessly utopian, out of touch with the material circumstances of everyday life. As a result, their participation in noncooperation often proved selective and inconsistent. Once the imminence of *swaraj* seemed to fade, the Surtis, still averse to taking political risks, became more and more reluctant to undergo the sacrifices that Gandhian politics required. It thus makes little sense to see ordinary city dwellers in Surat as more inherently radical than their elite leaders.

From a nationalist outlook, it is hard to argue that noncooperation achieved any enduring victories. India had not gained redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and it had failed to win *swaraj* within one year. From the perspective of Surat's merchants, petty traders, and artisans, however, the Congress agitations had achieved much. By 1923, the position of municipal commissioner had been eliminated, municipal administration was in a shambles, most municipal bylaws could no longer be enforced, and the Universal and Compulsory Education Act had become a dead letter. Some government controls had been relaxed and others were enforced unevenly. The crisis of World War I had now eased considerably for most residents. To the nationalists, the end of the noncooperation movement marked the beginning of a new period of apathy in Indian political life, when the larger population of the city generally abstained from congress affairs. To the city's underclasses, by contrast, this moment may indicate merely a return to less-

dramatic, everyday methods of defending personal and group interests, such as the uncoordinated efforts of individual families to avoid complying completely with municipal regulations or paying their taxes in full. Subaltern groups seem to have retreated from the civic domain only to refocus their energies on forms of politics separate from campaigns of the Congress and other elite figures. The Surtis thus did not give up their struggles to construct a better life; they only abandoned the sites on which they had fought these struggles—and the national and public meanings they had attached to their efforts—during the noncooperation era.

Yet such popular successes undoubtedly came at considerable cost. The withdrawal of most residents from public life meant that they would have little voice in constructing the larger political order that would follow noncooperation, that their politics would be confined largely to activities that would nibble at the social inequities and hardships produced by the rise of a modern state, and that they would remain dependent on the privileged figures who controlled access to critical positions of power in the legislature and the municipality.

ELITE POLITICS

The return of elite politics to its old constitutional track was both a consequence and a cause of the underclass retreat. As the promise of *swaraj* faded and as it became clear that the Surtis were gradually dissociating themselves from noncooperation, many of the Congress leaders began to reconsider their political options. Often they felt the need to resume bargaining with their rulers too compelling to continue their efforts to undermine the institutions of local self-government. And as they reentered the politics of legislative councils and municipalities, they often pursued their claims to justice through the idiom of public politics, reproducing conventional civic discourse through their political practice. They now became only representatives of the people, losing their identities as *chelas* and *sannyasis*. Abandoning the hard line of noncooperation in turn indicated clearly to the larger population that the achievement of some alternative to the colonial order was unlikely in the near future and that continued participation in the most conspicuous forms of nationalist resistance would probably not bear much more fruit.

The emergence of the Swarajya party during early 1923 opened the first cracks in the Gandhian strategy of noncooperation. Led in the Bombay Presidency by Vithalbhai Patel and M. R. Jayakar, the Swarajists proposed entering the reformed legislative council to pursue a policy of obstructing government from within. When Patel visited Surat

from Bombay in early May to solicit support for his party, a number of local politicians, including some who had been the staunchest supporters of noncooperation only two years earlier, quickly jumped on board. Surat suddenly became the center of Swarajist activity in Gujarat. Dr. Dixit, Dr. Mehta, and Maganlal Vidyarthi, all local noncooperators with sufficient education and professional training to make the shift to a politics based upon the idiom of constitutionalism and progress, assumed important positions in the Gujarat Provincial Swarajya party.[21] All three planned campaigns to run for provincial office.

Opposition to the Swarajya program came largely from activists who had been arrested and their supporters. In Surat, however, this opposition was muted owing to the intervention of Dayalji Desai, now president of the District Congress Committee. Fearing the potential for a major rupture between local nationalists, Dayalji attempted to cultivate mutual respect among the two factions. With his encouragement, "No-Changers" and Swarajists both appeared in the same public meetings to present their views on entry into the councils while confirming their shared commitment to Gandhi's constructive program, to agitation against the local municipality, and to the national schools. Dayalji even encouraged Vithalbhai Patel to address Surat's citizens from a Congress platform just before the elections.[22]

In recent years, historians have tended to view the willingness of Congress politicians to back the Swarajya party after 1923 as evidence of a materialistic concern with gaining access to networks of patronage controlled by the provincial legislatures.[23] Evidence from Surat certainly indicates that an interest in personal political influence was important, but it also suggests that scholars might need to probe further into the question of why this influence was sought. In Surat local Gandhians of all stripes were genuinely flustered by the ability of Liberal politicians to frustrate the Congress cause. Many felt that Chunilal Gandhi, the city's representative in the Bombay council, was partly responsible for the suspension of the noncooperating municipality, the appointment of the Committee of Management, and a variety of other government efforts to suppress the cause of *swaraj*. As long as persons with little commitment to the Congress program remained in control of the legislatures, they reasoned, government could easily thwart their activities. In entering the Bombay legislature, Dixit, Mehta, and Vidyarthi sought not only to paralyze the colonial government of the province but also to restore the municipality to Congress hands. By gaining control of the council, they believed that they could reinvigorate such efforts essential to attaining independence as nationalizing local schools. They by no means wished to abandon other aspects of the Congress constructive program such as the promotion of *khadi* and of Hindu-Muslim unity.

But once they decided to reenter legislative politics, the Swarajists found themselves compelled to adhere to political conventions quite different from those that had governed noncooperation. They defended their actions largely in terms of the principles of public discourse, in part because these principles allowed them best to dismiss the claims of their opponents. In the election campaign of September and October 1923, none of the Swarajya party's candidates used Gandhian rhetoric extensively. Each stressed the violations of citizen rights that had occurred under their opposition's tenure of office. According to their arguments, a coterie of Liberals such as Chunilal Gandhi, voted in by tiny minorities of the population during the boycotted elections of 1920, had frustrated the true will of the people. M. M. Mehta, running for Surat's single urban seat, contended that as a result of moderate cooperation with the British in the legislative councils, "the whole country has had to accept increases in the salt tax; citizens in the municipalities of Surat, Ahmedabad and Nadiad have had their rights of self-government taken from them; the birthright of mothers and fathers to educate their children as they wish has been trampled upon; reputable householders have been prosecuted and fined under the compulsory education law; and national schools have been locked up under various government schemes." "It is a duty of the representatives of the people," he insisted, ". . . to attempt to prevent such disastrous developments," thus criticizing the moderates for failing to perform their responsibilities as legislators while claiming that he, if elected, would certainly fulfill his obligations to his voters.[24] Dixit, running in the rural constituency of South Gujarat, promised in his speeches that the Swarajists would try to regain popular control over municipalities, to free Mahatma Gandhi and other political prisoners from jail, and to fight for independence and other political rights.[25] For the most part, the rhetoric of both candidates was devoid of the religious allusions they had employed just a year or so earlier. The language of representative government was clearly beginning to reestablish its preeminence in the civic arena.

Such appeals, however, were by themselves hardly sufficient to ensure election victories. After all, the public meetings of the Swarajist candidates, often attended by no more than fifty people, could not hope to reach the entire urban electorate of Surat, now more than seven thousand voters, or the even larger rural constituency. To a great extent the election of 1923 relied on techniques that had often been used in the campaigns of prewar Surat but that had been abandoned during the noncooperation years. Candidates again secured the support of agents—that is, men of local influence—to canvass neighborhoods of the city and persuade voters to attend the polls. On the day of the election, these agents intensified their personal methods of contact-

ing citizens.[26] With a number of private motor cars and carriages at their disposal, the Swarajists ferried many voters to the polling station at the city castle individually. The district magistrate's remarks that there had been "a great deal of improper influence used in the town," while obviously reflecting a heavy bias against the Congress, confirmed the existence of a second, more personal, idiom of politics operating alongside and supplementing civic discourse, one that the Swarajists used more effectively than the Liberals.[27] During the next provincial campaign, in 1926, the *Gujarat Mitra* would remark that these electoral practices had become so engrained that even "a voter only a hundred yards away from the polling station . . . expects a car to be near his door before he thinks of leaving his place for the purpose of voting."[28] English-educated politicians of every party tended to agree that these methods were necessitated by an electorate "ignorant of the value of the vote" which required further "training" in the proper exercise of democratic government.[29] No doubt the inaccessibility of constitutional rhetoric for the local population inhibited plebeian participation in the exercise of public power. But no one gave voice to the possibility that the language of liberal representative politics could be as responsible for that as any deficiency in the political education of the Surtis.

As a result of their effective use of this bilingual campaign, the Swarajists won a resounding success in the 1923 election. In Surat City, Dr. Mehta won easily, with 2,433 votes to Chunilal Gandhi's 407 and Jamshedji Antia's 302. Dr. Dixit won one of the two rural seats. Vidyarthi finished far down in the polling, but H. B. Shivdasani, a former assistant collector who had recently resigned his post and who had won the tacit backing of Dayalji when he signed up as a Congress member, was the leading vote getter in the countryside.[30] Shivdasani immediately became one of the most vocal and effective members of the Bombay Swarajists in the legislature. Even the old home ruler Kanaiyalal Desai, who finished third in the rural voting, signed the Congress pledge just before the election.

Once in the councils, Mehta, Dixit, and Shivdasani found themselves bound by severe constraints, some of which they had never anticipated. Within the Bombay council, colonial authority was still strong. Under the system of dyarchy that had been created by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919, wide areas of policy were entirely excluded from discussion by the elected legislators. But even in those spheres of policy designated as appropriately within the council's domain, government and its Indian allies retained considerable informal influence. Owing to unevenness in support for the Swarajists elsewhere in the Bombay Presidency and to the abundance of separate electorates and reserved seats for Muslims, non-Brahmans, and a variety of special

interests, the nationalists captured only a minority of the positions on the council. Only persons with "loyal" inclinations—including one Britisher and two Muslims—were selected as ministers. Of course, Dixit, Mehta, and Shivdasani could have chosen—as the all-India program of their party suggested—to resign from the council, but this would again leave them with no influence in such matters as the restoration of Surat Municipality. On issues that concerned them most, their best option seemed to lie in alliance with Bombay Independents and, on occasion, the Moderates. Any partnership in the council, however, required at the very least a relatively civil demeanor, that is, a renewed adherence to the conventions and idiom of parliamentary politics. In the end, to paraphrase David Arnold's work on Madras politics, it was not the Swarajists who captured the legislature but the legislature which captured the Swarajists.[31]

Members of the new party continued to espouse the ideal of obstruction in principle. Dixit and particularly Shivdasani pestered the governor's ministers with endless questions, which usually had to be sent off to the departments of government for answers; they made long tirades on the budget and on other issues that came before the legislature, whether or not these issues genuinely engaged their interest. And, for a brief period in 1926, they joined the other Swarajists in boycotting the council.[32] But when matters they considered to be vital arose, such as municipal affairs, they made sure their voices were heard. In March 1924, only a few months after the council began its sessions, Dixit petitioned Gulam Hussein Hidayatullah, the minister of local self-government, to allow new municipal elections in Surat and to bring the Committee of Management's administration to an end.[33] In July he fought a municipal bill giving government the power to dissolve municipalities and call new elections in addition to the powers of supercession it already possessed. In both cases, he reminded government of its own avowed commitments to the devolution of power. In the July debates, for instance, he argued: "We are now working the new reforms; the ultimate aim of the British government is to give self-government to India, and if you go on adding further powers to the power already possessed by government in dealing with the municipalities which they consider as defaulting, I do not think it will be consistent in spirit so far as the present reforms are concerned."[34]

This sort of constitutional argument was obviously a major departure from the rhetoric noncooperators had used three years earlier when they had claimed that it was a sinful or *adharmik* act to participate in the legislature and that boycott of the councils embodied the Hindu ideal of renunciation and self-sacrifice. But now the Congress leaders were addressing a different audience and with different purposes. The

need to influence provincial ministers and to win the support of Independents and Moderates required use of an idiom more at home in the halls of the legislature than on the streets of Surat. Ironically, representation of the people now involved using symbolic skills that uneducated citizens could not hope to master: knowledge of legislative rituals and procedures, familiarity with parliamentary traditions, the ability to speak and think quickly in English and to manipulate legal rules and statistics in debate. In following the conventions of public debate, even for the purpose of contesting colonial policy, the Swarajists in essence conceded that the major issues of provincial politics were going to be fought on the terrain of constitutional and devolutionary principle. At a more implicit level, they agreed to strive for the same kind of polity that their British overlords were now themselves attempting to forge: a liberal, representative order that would pursue the objective of political and economic progress.

MUNICIPAL POLITICS

Municipal politics followed a very similar pattern, with elite leaderships creating political styles that were essentially renegotiated versions of those that had existed before the emergence of Gandhian movements. By 1924, the noncooperators as a whole were convinced that the only way to regain command of the local scene was to wrest control of Surat's municipality from the Committee of Management. The provincial administration, however, determined when elections would occur, waiting until February 1925, almost four years after the last local campaign had taken place (elections in theory were supposed to happen every three years). In the months leading up to this election, the noncooperators became embroiled in a major conflict with the Bombay administration over the election rolls. Requiring all voters to have paid their taxes in full, the provincial government denied the electoral eligibility of thousands of citizens who had not yet paid their arrears by mid-1924. At one point, it appeared that only nine thousand of twenty-nine thousand potentially qualified residents would be eligible to vote. The Congress found itself in the odd position of encouraging those it had once asked not to pay their taxes now to submit their delinquent payments as quickly as possible. One thousand additional householders got on the final electoral roll, but nineteen thousand persons most sympathetic to the nationalists were disenfranchised. Even Dayalji Desai, president of the District Congress Committee, could not vote.[35]

Under these conditions, it was remarkable that the noncooperators were able to achieve any success. They formed a coalition group, the National party, with a group of independent nationalists such as the

former home rulers Karsukhram Vora and Prasannavadan Desai. In a campaign similar in style and strategy to the provincial elections fifteen months earlier, this "party"—actually a loose alliance with little coherent program—won about twenty-five of the fifty seats on the municipality and successfully placed Dr. Dixit as council president. The National party ousted the noncooperators' most important political enemy, Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta, who had become so unpopular during his tenure as chairman of the Committee of Management that he failed even to capture his seat in the council.

The position of the noncooperators, however, was far weaker than it had been in 1921. They now directly controlled only fifteen seats. Despite the supposed devolution of power to the city, the Bombay administration still nominated ten candidates itself. And it now set up separate electorates for Muslim voters, effectively placing eight more seats beyond the reach of the Congress. Many of the staunchest Gandhians were no longer among those elected. Virtually all the new councillors were drawn from the ranks of the highly educated professionals; with the exception of Kunvarji Mehta, the ashramites were completely missing from the council's membership. There were very few traders as well.[36]

The hands of the noncooperators were tied by their need for allies and by the practical problems of running a municipality under continued colonial domination. Resolutions offered in the old Gandhian spirit, such as those asking the council to grant further funds to the Rashtriya Kelavani Mandal or to refuse the allocation of moneys to the government-controlled local school board, regularly met with defeat. The difficulties of the congress group in raising funds for the *mandal* in fact forced Dixit eventually to merge the national primary schools with the municipal schools and to accept government supervision and funding of both, obviously a painful step for a person who had so publicly committed himself to national education.[37]

After these initial setbacks, the noncooperators increasingly moderated their rhetoric, moving closer to the accepted canons of municipal protocol. "Whatever be the decisions of the municipality," noted the progovernment paper *Gujarat Mitra* in August, implicitly contrasting the council's behavior with that of the 1921 local body, "it is satisfactory to note that as a whole the discussions are carried on sometimes sensibly."[38] When the provincial government adopted measures restricting the jurisdiction of the municipality, the council as a whole often agreed to register its objections in purely constitutional terms. After the Bombay legislature proposed a bill that would establish greater control over the executive officers of provincial municipalities, for instance, the Surat corporation sent a resolution to the Bombay administration con-

demning the proposal by a ten-to-one margin. Using a careful, legalistic wording, the councillors directly invoked the lessons of the British tradition of self-government:

> That in view of the fact that the whole system of local self-government in England is built upon the principle of the predominance of the elected councillors and their participation in both the deliberative and administrative work by means of the Committee system and the subordination of the paid professional official to the unpaid elected amateur and in view of the fact that "so far as Europe is concerned the development of local self-government has gone furthest in Great Britain" this corporation flatly refuses to believe that this system cannot succeed here. This corporation further declares that this system has never been given a fair trial and there are no proofs of its failure.
>
> The want of rapid progress by municipal bodies in the mofussil is due to the lack of funds [which is] due to the poverty of the people and not to any lack of public spirit on the part of the citizens or their representatives.[39]

This was the unabashed use of public discourse, implicitly imbued with most of its evolutionary assumptions. What was being contested again was not whether the city should be measured along the scale of progress, but exactly where along that scale it fell. The municipality's members contended that Surat had attained a fairly advanced stage of civic consciousness and thus was entitled to most of the rights enjoyed by the citizens of British cities. They protested what they saw as government efforts to place their city and other cities in the presidency further down the linear path of history. Both government and the councillors were agreed on the general direction of desired change: toward the establishment of representative institutions modeled after those in England. Where they disagreed was over the amount of public spirit already present in the Bombay Presidency.

Just how far the new council could go in conforming to the traditions of prewar municipal practice became apparent in late 1925, when the Bombay administration announced that Sir Leslie Wilson, governor of the province, would visit the city. After the district collector asked the local body whether it wanted to present an address to Wilson, noncooperators on the municipality, led by Champaklal Ghia, at first opposed the measure, feeling that it would be derogatory to the self-respect of any elected Indian to have to pay homage to a British official. Ghia's supporters, however, were too few to carry the day. Feeling among the councillors ran strong that this was an opportunity to plead for greater government funding and self-governing privileges that could not be missed. By a margin of twenty-five to nineteen, the municipality resolved "to give an address to his Excellency whose

benevolent and progressive administration has created in the people the feeling of love and admiration, stating the several primary wants of the people in connection with the city drainage and general sanitation."[40] Initially the council rejected the approval of any moneys for the address while approving 301 rupees for an address to Vithalbhai Patel, president of the Bombay legislature. Soon, however, it reversed itself, and approved 601 rupees to cover the costs of the occasion.[41] The noncooperators were successful only in excising phrases that smacked of flattery from the wording of the address, making it a polite but undeferential presentation.[42]

By the time Wilson finally arrived in the city, the municipality had arranged a gala event. With just a few of the most committed congressmen absenting themselves, the councillors greeted the governor at the train station. One member of the local body, accustomed to wearing *khadi* at municipal meetings, wore a "fine red Surati turban" commonly associated with imperial ceremony. After the usual ritual of handshaking on the railway platform, Dixit, as president of the municipal council, read the address of honor and placed it in a sandalwood box made by local artisans before offering it to the governor. He then presented the governor with a garland decorated with little silk union jacks. Bhimbhai Naik, president of the District Local Board, gave the governor a similar address after Dixit's. In perhaps the most extensive visit ever made by a high-ranking British official, Wilson toured the town, stopping repeatedly to be garlanded and to receive addresses from a wide range of communities, public and educational institutions, and prosperous businessmen. Later he attended an evening party in his honor at the *nawab*'s palace that was attended by most of Surat's civic leaders.[43] Clearly the city's leadership was intent on conveying its respect to the visiting dignitary—effectively conferring authority upon him—even though such symbolic action technically violated the proscriptions of noncooperation.

The address of the council, though stripped of the hierarchical embellishments typical of prewar testimonials, was otherwise much like earlier addresses. After welcoming Wilson and his wife to the town, the document set forth a number of local concerns. It began with issues related to the principle of self-government, pleading for establishing a fully elected council and the end of government appointments to Surat's school board. It then put forth a series of claims to public funds. The councillors petitioned the government to provide moneys for local industrial education, building a girls' middle school, and dredging the Tapi River. Most ironically, it asked the governor to help as much as possible in obtaining funds for local primary schools so that universal and compulsory primary education could become a reality in the city.

Throughout the address, the councillors implicitly confirmed their commitment to the principles of civic progress and representative government. The document's claims to justice derived entirely from parliamentary logic.[44]

Thus at the elite level, the politics of bargaining with the colonial administration had now almost fully replaced the politics of noncooperation. Former Gandhian nationalists, now severely constricted by the institutional context in which they were working, funneled their efforts in directions that allowed them to question the policies of the Anglo-Indian government and to engage in negotiations over matters ranging from government funds to self-governing privileges but without attacking colonialism directly or challenging the general validity of political models that India had derived from British culture. Dixit and many of his associates were weaned from Gandhian conventions and assumptions, not by any British-directed conspiracy or by personal duplicity, but by the desire to maintain their political efficacy in a context of continued colonial strength.

By the municipal elections in 1926–27, Dixit and the other councillors had become so committed to the ideals of urban development that they began to pursue public policies clearly at odds with the preoccupations of many of their constituents. They imposed new cesses, tried to enforce municipal bylaws, attempted to reinstate universal and primary education, and even began to advocate building a major drainage system in the city that would necessitate significant increases in taxation. All these efforts met with widespread but disorganized resistance in the city. Tax arrears returned to noncooperation levels.[45] Thousands of parents from artisan and petty-trader backgrounds kept their children out of schools.[46] Encroachments on public space continued, reaching a total of more than eight thousand at the time of the city survey in 1926.[47] Hundreds of residents continued to connect their house drains to storm-water drains surreptitiously, in violation of municipal law.[48] Local feeling against the plans to develop a new drainage system became so strong that councillors put it off, recognizing that their reelection to municipal office was clearly at stake.

The Congress leaders who had come to power in the local council in 1921 by capitalizing on popular resentment against municipal reforming efforts now took up the cause of modernization despite continued antipathy to this agenda. Not surprisingly, Dixit and his supporters failed to retain their control of the council in the elections of 1928. But astonishingly they were replaced by a regime headed by Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta, the once-hated chairman of the Committee of Management. The Mehta council, however, soon proved even more zealous in avowing its commitment to reform. The core concerns of the city dwellers, which were opposed to the ideals of urban progress, contin-

ued to be unarticulated in the civic arena. Open advocacy of such "backward" sentiments was simply not appropriate in public politics; the orthodoxies of civic expression precluded voicing subaltern sentiments there.

By the time of the civil disobedience movement of 1930, Dixit himself was so comfortable working within public discourse, so uncomfortable resorting to the Gandhian idiom, that he was unable to readjust to civil disobedience and the resurgence of the Mahatma in Indian politics. He lost much personal power as a result. Coping with the reality of institutions established by the colonial rulers, one Congress politician after another, inside the city and elsewhere, would either abandon a strict adherence to Gandhian principle or withdraw into constructive work outside the civic domain. No wonder that the Mahatma's visions would be considered utopian and unrealistic by the time independence arrived; processes of negotiation and resistance within colonial structures now worked to allow a liberal representative culture of politics to dominate the civic arena.

What emerged during the 1920s was a strange sort of representative system that could only imperfectly reflect the concerns of urban voters. The only potential candidates available for election—that is, those candidates who fully appreciated the ways in which to manipulate the idiom of democratic rights, municipal regulation, and law—were persons who committed themselves publicly to principles of political and social development in conflict with the core concerns of most local residents. The Surtis could block the advance of progress by voting into power a faction opposed to the one already in office, but they would still be electing an elite with roughly similar commitments. More successfully, they could resist civic policy through small, uncoordinated acts of noncompliance sanctioned by local culture. Such actions could be quite effective in checking individual policies of the municipality or government and in slowing the overall pace of reform. But they were never capable of bringing about a political order based upon an alternative set of principles. The underclasses of Surat were marginal participants in the affairs of the public sphere, checked on the one hand by their lack of access to that arena's critical idioms, on the other by leaderships who conceived of politics in terms that only indirectly and partially addressed the citizenry's material and psychic needs.

CONCLUSION

To say that the language of Surti politics had come full circle by 1928 would be somewhat simplistic. The boundaries of political debate had changed considerably since before the war: officers of the colonial administration now accepted the notion that Indians would govern them-

selves at some time in the not-too-distant future; local leaderships refused to pay British administrators the social deference that had once been expected; most strikingly, members of Surat's political elite had now become almost full-fledged members of the ruling group. Yet the political rhetoric of the later 1920s was a permutation of prewar public discourse rather than distinctly new; it still bore the stamp of its creation under colonial domination. The notions of progress and representative government had returned to a central place in the public arena, creating a sense of continued movement toward democratic forms of government but in effect excluding most residents in the city from participation. The syncretic rhetoric of the Gandhian period had been abandoned. A form of colonial nationalism had emerged that appeared safe and rational to the British themselves, making possible the establishment of comfortable working relationships between members of the congress and the civil administration.

In this environment, only persons able to command the languages of both the inner and outer domains of the city could have a full voice in local affairs. Others possessed power in the civic arena to the extent they could attach themselves to these English-educated politicians. So while *sheths* with money and access to caches of voters might latch on very easily to publicists in the civic arena who would advocate their interests and preoccupations, women, laborers, artisans, and petty traders more commonly found themselves shut out from Surat's key political institutions. Few plebeian elements entered public discourse. A political order based upon bilingualism had now almost fully reconsolidated itself.

Yet there was one sense in which a significant transfiguration had occurred. This was the development during the 1920s of a politics based on the principle of religious community. Bolstered by the resurgence of the constitutional order, communalism would emerge as a form of political expression that would thereafter always threaten both Gandhian visions of Indian society and the civic-representative ideal.

TWELVE

The Politics of Communalism

The emergence of communal politics during the 1920s could hardly have been foreseen by the most astute observer of the local scene in the previous decade. During the entire colonial period between 1800 and World War I, there had never been a major incident of communal strife between Hindus and Muslims. Indeed, the most serious episode of violence that one might call communal had been a clash between Shia Muslim Daudi Bohras and Sunni Muslims over a celebration of Muharram in 1910.[1] In general, both Hinduism and Islam loosely bound a great diversity of social groupings rather than defined coherent communities poised for political action. In the civic arena, neither the Hindus nor the Muslims had ever come together as a community for any purpose whatsoever. "Muslim" politics was the preserve of members of a tiny elite, mostly descendants of the old Mughal nobility, who had sought to perpetuate their niche in the colonial order as the natural leaders of their religious group. These families had founded Muslim political associations, supported Muslim education, and participated in imperial rituals as headmen of their religious group. Just before the war, they had become increasingly interested in pan-Islamic concerns, expressing their concern to the imperial administration, for instance, about the threat to the Ottoman caliph posed by the Balkan wars,[2] and imploring the government to aid Indian pilgrims traveling on the hajj.[3] They had not, however, endeavored to organize their coreligionists in their attempts to influence British rulers. Most persons in Surat who professed Islam were as much shut out of Muslim politics as the larger population of the city was excluded from public life.

By the late 1920s, the political scene in Surat had changed radically. Questions of religious community entered the civic arena dramatically. Tensions between Hindus and Muslims built up in the city, culminating

in a series of bloody riots between 1927 and 1929 that left nearly a dozen Surtis dead, causing most politicians in the city to identify openly as representatives of their religious communities. In the aftermath of these riots, the city was so polarized along religious lines that cooperation between the two communities was precluded for the remainder of the colonial era. The politics of the late 1920s undermined the possibility for a truly intercommunal leadership.

Such developments may seem especially paradoxical because this era of communal conflict immediately followed the most intense period of Hindu-Muslim unity in national politics, the noncooperation movement of 1920–24. But on closer examination, this paradox disappears. In a way not intended by the noncooperators, the anticolonialism of Gandhian politics conspired with hegemonic processes associated with colonialism to produce two distinct religious consciousnesses, one Hindu, one Muslim. The sociological understandings that informed noncooperation reinforced colonial discursive assumptions in producing communally oriented loyalties. Ultimately the logic of Gandhian discourse contained within it tendencies that undermined efforts to achieve communal harmony and that deflected attempts to confront the liberal representative order.

WORLD WAR I AND MUSLIM POLITICS

The widening of specifically Muslim preoccupations in the civic arena was in part an outgrowth of the wartime crisis. Between 1914 and 1919, many Muslims of Surat, like many Hindus, suffered from inflation, new municipal policies, higher taxes, and restrictions on trade. Perhaps recognizing the saliency of appeals to religious sentiment in the colonial context, Muslim groupings increasingly defended themselves against these intrusive developments by evoking the language of Islamic principle and of community in their petitions to the government. Surat's butchers, upset at new municipal bylaws that would restrict their business activities to well-defined markets, argued that the measures would prohibit acts of sacrifice in homes, thus forcing women living in *purdah* to abstain from celebrating important Muslim occasions.[4] Masud Alam Khan, head of the Nawab of Bela family, objected to new housing regulations by suggesting that Muslims might be especially affected: "The Municipal Commissioner is acting against the feelings and sentiments of a large majority of the people of Surat, particularly of the Mahomedan community, in not allowing them to construct or reconstruct privies in the upper floors of their homes."[5] Clearly, one way of responding to the intrusion of the provincial and local administrations into previously inviolate areas of local life was to

represent one's own concerns as being the grievance of a religious minority that the British had a special duty to protect.

In some instances, it was possible to detect more narrow personal and group interests underlying the rhetoric of community. But a few municipal measures during these years clearly affected the religious sensibilities of many of the city's Muslims. In 1913, for instance, the local body had passed a bylaw calling for restrictions against overcrowding in cemeteries, for clear demarcation of graves, and for the registration of all burials. The managers of local burial places, whose incomes were directly endangered by the measure, were particularly alarmed by the new regulations. But many other Muslims, fearing that the practice of burying their dead in family graves was in danger, also reacted strongly. Islamic scholars took up the cause, asserting, according to the second-hand account of one British officer, that the "Koran is full of prohibitions against anything like a demarcation of a grave or the counting of the number of graves in a burial ground."[6] The heads of the Edrus, Bakza, Nawab of Surat, and Nawab of Bela families eventually persuaded the municipality and the district collector to drop the most worrisome of the new laws.

A more serious instance occurred in 1920 after it was discovered that the municipality had built a public urinal in Kelapith on a location thought to have once been the site of a mosque. A number of leaderships in the city, including members of the gentry, Islamic scholars, and a few Muslim professionals, organized a movement to have the urinal removed and a mosque restored on the spot. At one point in the struggle, Muslim merchants offered to buy the site; on another, the Muslims asked the municipality to grant the community the plot of land. The local body, however, remained largely unresponsive to both approaches. Its intransigence prompted the Muslim community, in a meeting headed by Nasrullah Khan of the Nawab of Surat family and Sheikh Ali Bakza of the Bakza family, to draft a "monster" petition to the council. Containing nearly five thousand signatures, the petition complained that "the religious feelings and susceptibilities [of the Muslims] have been greatly wounded by the majority of the Hindu councillors strongly opposing the granting of the plot of land for the purpose of a mosque."[7] When the issue came before the municipality for final consideration, the council agreed not to approve any new construction on the site but referred the matter of how to dispose of the land to the sanitary committee, essentially killing the possibility that a mosque would ever be built there. All the Muslim members of the municipality walked out of the meeting hall in protest. The issue of the Kelapith mosque simmered for months before being overwhelmed by the affairs of the Khilafat movement.

As dissatisfactions with government and municipal policy grew, the most prominent Muslim families found it increasingly difficult to preserve their status as natural leaders through old political methods. The descendants of the Mughal nobility had come to pride themselves on their reputation for loyalty to empire and were extremely reluctant to take actions that could jeopardize their special relations with imperial officials. But many underclass Muslims were no longer content to allow a collaborating leadership to act as community spokesmen. Surat's collector warned provincial officers at the time of the burial grounds movement that "if they are betrayed by their leaders, the mob is quite capable of being stimulated to disorder on the instigation of the persons who derive their profits from these graveyards."[8] Like other older elites in the city, the Muslim gentry struggled to maintain its credibility in the face of this growing undercurrent of resistance.

These pressures from below made possible serious challenges to the dominance of the Muslim notables from men who had never before exercised any significant influence in the civic arena. While the old elite was drawn exclusively from the ranks of immigrant Muslims, the new contenders included several figures from convert communities. Most prominent among these people were Sheikh Ali Hamdani, a Daudi Bohra trader, and Muhammad Afzal Narmawala, a Patani Bohra and a graduate of Aligarh Muslim University. Both were attracted to the program of the Home Rule League and supported the Lucknow alliance between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. During the later war years, they and their supporters began to organize meetings in Surat to protest government policy on a number of Muslim issues. In November 1917, for instance, they held a meeting attended by perhaps fifteen hundred Muslims to pass resolutions against the arrest of the militant Muslim brothers from North India, Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali, and to organize a chapter of the Muslim League in the city.[9]

The more established gentry families clearly felt threatened by these activities and redoubled their own efforts to reassert community leadership. In order to deflate the claims of Narmawala and his followers, however, members of the older Muslim elite had to abandon their quiet, deferential political style and show that they, too, commanded the support of their coreligionists. Several days after the meeting to protest the Ali brothers' arrest, Sayyid Ali Edrus, president of the local Anjuman-e-Islam, organized a countermeeting to register community objections to the Congress-League pact and to the activities of the Home Rule League. He later claimed that twenty-three prominent Muslim leaders had called the meeting and that more than two thousand Muslims had supported resolutions introduced there.[10] The nota-

bles also began to revitalize the Mahomedan Union—which had not met for several years—recruiting new members and raising substantial funds for Muslim education in the city.[11] They took up such causes as that of the Muslim burial grounds, the Kelapith mosque, Islamic education in primary schools, and orphanages for Muslim children. Seemingly, then, the challenge of Narmawala and his supporters prompted many of the prominent notable families to intensify their efforts to sustain recognition as Muslim leaders. By the beginning of noncooperation, the conflicts of the war period had already led to the heightened significance of religious identity in civic politics.

GANDHIAN POLITICS AND ISLAMIC IDENTITY

It was in this context, as the rhetoric of religious community began to find a larger and more constant audience in the city, that Gandhian politics began to influence Muslim political action. Though directed toward building united agitation against the British, the noncooperation movement actually strengthened the importance of communal preoccupations for Hindu and Muslim alike, making possible the era of violent conflict of the later 1920s. Acting and thinking politically as members of a religious community, which before the war had not been a reflexive action for most Surtis, quickly became engrained as common sense.

The sharpening of the boundaries between Hindus and Muslims was at least indirectly an outgrowth of the application of Gandhian conceptions to local politics. Through the very attempt to combat negative British characterizations of Indian society, Gandhi was almost compelled to accept some of the categories and assumptions of colonial analysis.[12] The Mahatma, of course, rejected the imperial premise that religious groupings in India were antagonistic communities inevitably at odds with each other. Hindus and Muslims, he asserted, were the "two eyes of the country"; cooperation between the two was possible if each community would respect the feelings of the other. But in arriving at this counterhegemonic contention, he essentially acknowledged key precepts of colonial discourse: that particular scriptures were the chief defining features of Indian religion, that religious affiliation was the most important sociological principle around which Indian society was organized, that those who belonged to a specific religious grouping shared important common political interests, and that these interests were at least partially distinct from those of persons who professed other faiths. In some of his writings, Gandhi even seemed to accept the notion that religious identity was the most critical source of conflict in Indian society. Hindus, he observed in his journal *Young India,* tended

to resent the killing of cows by Muslims, while Muslims held similar objections about certain Hindu practices. Only by sincere expressions of mutual respect and self-denial could such differences be overcome. In order to deserve self-rule, Indians would have to manage their antagonisms and prove that they were capable of working with each other.[13] Whatever the validity of these understandings for the rest of India, they did not at all capture the reality of Surat's society, which had never been organized along the lines of religion (as defined in terms of scriptural communities) and where killing cows or playing music before mosques had not become significant political issues. But since Gandhian thinking informed the shape of local noncooperation in very serious ways, it subtly came to influence self-definitions of political actors in Surat, both Hindu and Muslim.

Gandhi perceived himself to be a leader primarily able to command the support of Hindus, and he eagerly sought out Islamic causes in order to cement a symbolic alliance between his community and the Muslims against the colonial administration.[14] Soon after his return to India from South Africa in 1915, he developed ties with the Ali brothers and their religious teacher, Abdul Bari of Lucknow. By 1919, the three men had persuaded him that Indian Muslims regarded the Ottoman sultan as the *khalifa,* that is, as the temporal and spiritual head of the Islamic world, and that the community thus deeply resented the Allies' attempts to dismember the Ottoman Empire. They also provided him with conclusive proof that the British had violated wartime promises to uphold the sultan's authority over the Islamic holy lands of the Middle East. Opposition to British treatment of the *khalifa,* Gandhi realized, was one he could use to deflate colonial claims to be the protectors of India's minorities and to demonstrate the ability of the country's religious groupings to support each other. Hoping to integrate Muslim politics with the politics of *satyagraha,* he offered the Ali brothers his help in generating a wider backing for the Khilafat cause. At the same time, he encouraged Muslim leaders to act as spokesmen for their community and to intensify their protests against British policy toward Turkey. Thus, he envisioned a larger movement in which it would be possible for distinct religious groups to fight together under the umbrella of nationalism at least in part for distinct religious causes.[15]

In Surat, the noncooperators, following the lead of the Mahatma, accepted the importance of the Khilafat issue and granted Muslims a separate place as Muslims within their already powerful movement. The Gandhians in the city perceived themselves as addressing mainly Hindus and Jains. They left the appeal for Muslim support largely to a distinct group of Muslim political leaders who were already eager to challenge the British on the Khilafat issue and who could rouse the

religious sentiment of the community. In a process not unlike colonial efforts to assure Muslims representation on local and provincial bodies, the local Congress created its own informal system of "reserved" places for Muslims and encouraged Muslim aspirants to leadership to take up Islamic issues self-consciously in their politics.[16]

Activist Muslims led by Muhammad Afzal Narmawala, the proponent of the Muslim League, quickly moved into the slots provided for Muslims within noncooperation. Many had long identified with the plight of the sultan and now found a means of defending their *khalifa*'s position within an already powerful movement squarely located in the civic arena. Narmawala soon developed into one of Surat's leading Khilafatists, becoming increasingly outspoken in his pan-Islamic and anti-British statements. Miasaheb Fejullabhai Hamdani, a Daudi Bohra educationist involved in serious conflicts with the leaders of the Bohra community, was another Muslim leaguer who embraced the Khilafat cause. Narmawala and Hamdani were joined by a number of other persons who had never participated in the municipal-national arena before: merchants, Islamic scholars, and a few others of diverse backgrounds. The most important of these was Sayyid Ahmed Edrus, a member of the so-called lesser branch of Surat's prestigious Edrus family, a family with its own shrine and a reputation for performing miracles. Edrus had been an official in the excise department of the Bombay administration until 1920, when he dramatically resigned his post in protest against British treatment of Turkey.[17] He quickly assumed a leading role in organizing Surat's Muslims as well as the presidency of the Surat District Congress Committee.

As a gesture of unity with the Hindus, the Muslim leadership chose as president of the local Khilafat committee M. M. Rayaji, a Nagar Brahman and a prominent member of the Home Rule League. Rayaji's main functions in the movement, however, were to secure Hindu support for this Muslim cause rather than to exert an overarching leadership. He clearly directed his appeal on the Khilafat issue to a Hindu audience. "Hindus and Muslims, the two great communities of India," he argued in one public address, "are like two limbs of a body. Just as other parts of the body feel pain when one limb is injured, it is the duty of Hindus to help Muslims when they suffer a blow to their religion."[18] On occasion, his rhetoric raised questions about the past that some Muslims must have certainly found offensive: "This question [of the Khilafat] is one of religion and religion is dear to every man. . . . Those who know history know that when Muslims attacked Hindu kingdoms, Brahmans and Hindus willingly gave up their lives for the sake of their religion."[19] Rayaji's tenure as president was also a very brief one. In late 1920, after the Calcutta Congress demanded the boycott of legislative

councils, he abandoned his role on the committee, and like most home rulers, retired temporarily from civic politics. Given the understandings of politics that he entertained as leader of the Khilafat committee, his later reincarnation as the city's most ardent communalist hardly seems surprising. After his departure, leadership of the movement was assumed by a heterogeneous set of Muslim men who occupied a separate place in noncooperation, complementing the Gandhians but remaining distinct from them.

Between 1919 and 1922, Narmawala and the other Muslim activists developed a distinct Muslim political rhetoric that allowed them both to confront British power and to appeal to their coreligionists. Their language was markedly different from that of the Hindu noncooperators. While the Gandhians spoke a Gujarati laced with Sanskrit-derived words, Khilafatists addressed their audiences in Urdu or a highly Urduized Gujarati. The reading of poems in Urdu or Persian on the *khalifa* was a regular feature of their meetings.[20] A *jari* worker, Gani Dahinwala, achieved some local repute as a composer of Urdu poems stressing the obligation of Muslims to support the *khalifa.*[21]

In speeches at public meetings, the Khilafatists emphasized pan-Islamic ideals, fashioning a universalistic faith that was divorced from the everyday religious practice of most specific Muslim groupings in the city but that nonetheless tapped symbols common to all members of the community. Besides the *khalifa,* the most important of these symbols was the Quran. Muslim leaders repeatedly drew upon the Islamic scriptures in asserting the justice of their cause. In a talk given on the Khilafat Day held in March 1920, Fejullabhai Hamdani condemned writers in England who had claimed few Muslims really cared about the fate of the sultan, warning that "it is written in the Koran that God's disgrace is on him who is untruthful."[22] Narmawala, addressing the same meeting, defiantly asserted that it was an inescapable Quranic obligation for Muslims to keep the holy lands of Arabia free from non-Muslim control, even if they had to sacrifice their own lives.[23] Sayyid Ahmed Edrus employed similar logic in a letter he wrote to the *Bombay Chronicle:*

> Laws of Islam are unalterable and no Muslim can excuse himself from performing what has been imposed on him by God in the Koran, and by the Prophet in Hadith. If . . . [he] does, he ceases to be a Muslim.
>
> Maintenance of the sanctity of *jaziratul Arab* [the Islamic holy lands] and Khilafat are the religious impositions on Muslims and therefore no Muslim can tolerate subjugation of either by any non-Muslim power.[24]

The Khilafatists thus formulated a distinct language and distinct moral principles applying only to members of their religious commu-

nity. They shaped an Islam that allowed Muslims to cooperate with Hindus without being completely absorbed by the larger movement.

The distinctive quality of the Muslim political appeal was reflected also in the rituals of noncooperation. In general, the Gandhians and the Khilafatists arranged complementary yet separate observances to reach their communities. Most Surti Muslims did not see Congress ceremonies as occasions for their participation, perhaps because such occasions were so charged with Hindu symbolism. As a result, when speakers at public meetings called out "*Vande Mataram,*" crowds responded with a resounding cry, but when the same speakers shouted "*Allah-o-Akbar,*" there was often little response.[25] There were, however, specific observances designed to foster Muslim support. Foremost among these were the Khilafat Days that Gandhi himself called on several occasions before the formal inauguration of noncooperation. In October 1919, Gandhi urged all Muslims to observe a day of mourning on the 21st and "to fast and pray and suspend all business and close their shops . . . and hold monster meetings and pass resolutions of protest against the contemplated betrayal of Turkey."[26] Hindus were to play a supporting role by observing a *hartal,* thus putting a "sacred seal on the Hindu-Muhammadan bond."[27] In Surat, the Khilafatists stressed Islam-centered concerns in the ceremonies they held to commemorate the occasion. The primary focus of the day for Muslims was a meeting at the Khwaja Dana Saheb mosque. Thousands gathered to pray and to pass resolutions protesting British policy toward Turkey.[28] The audience at a public meeting held later in the evening, by contrast, was predominantly Hindu.[29] This first Khilafat Day thus involved two parallel but distinct dramatic performances, both of which demonstrated the unpopularity of British rule.

This first Khilafat Day met with a somewhat mixed popular response, but a second organized the following March proved an unqualified victory for noncooperators eager to gather Muslim support. Virtually all the shops in the city, with the exception of a few tea hotels and a few stores of Parsis, closed down for the day. Muslim horse-carriage drivers, who had not observed the Rowlatt Satyagraha, struck work. Muslims flooded various mosques in the city for afternoon prayers, where their leaders delivered sermons on the state of the Khilafat. A public meeting held in the evening was much more a joint affair than that associated with the first Khilafat Day, since many Muslim leaders gave speeches and many Muslims were in attendance. But Hindu and Muslim speakers appeared to be addressing different audiences in the crowd. The Gandhians present made a few initial comments on the Khilafat question and the need for Hindu-Muslim unity, then went on to discuss home rule and other more general Congress is-

sues. Muslim leaders, on the other hand, were far more passionate in their speeches and stuck more closely to the situation of the *khalifa* and the holy lands.[30]

Receptions planned for national-level leaders varied considerably according to the religion of the visitor. Muslim figures were greeted by the Khilafat Committee and by other local Muslim leaders, Hindus by officers of the Congress and municipal councillors. When the Ali brothers stopped in Surat in February 1920, they were garlanded at the station by Khilafatists and by representatives of prominent Muslim business firms. They toured major Muslim localities, pausing often there to be garlanded by heads of various firms and neighborhood organizations. Though the brothers attended the opening of the local Swadeshi store and an intercommunity public meeting, other critical points in their tour were chosen in a clear effort to win Muslim support and to map out a sacred geography that was distinctly Islamic. The highlights of the visit were prayer meetings in the Chok Bazaar mosque and a trip to Rander, a small town close to Surat dominated by its Sunni Bohras.[31] Hindu leaders visiting the city were escorted to completely different strategic locations, including the Municipality, the Swaraj ashram, and the banks of the holy river Tapi.

Muslims even organized their own *prabhat feris* (processions) separate from those of Hindus. Sometimes, they would gather at a small mosque in Gopipura, then proceed through the city singing songs with Islamic overtones, before finally ending at the Khwaja Dana Saheb mosque, one of the two most important Islamic shrines in Surat. In contrast to the processions of Hindus, which often assumed a lively character with loud music, drums, cymbals, and exuberant singing, the Muslim processions were marked quietly and with great solemnity. Black banners symbolizing mourning or perhaps a sense of millennial expectation were draped by Muslim shopkeepers along the procession route. Leaders of the community clearly felt that exuberance was inappropriate for Muslims, particularly when their religion was in danger.[32]

The success of all these rhetorical and ritual efforts in organizing local Muslims was considerable. Thousands of Muslims of diverse backgrounds responded to the Khilafatists' appeals, attending Khilafat ceremonies, giving up foreign dress, and leaving government-funded Urdu schools for national ones. When noncooperators called for the boycott of provincial elections, only twenty-four of approximately fourteen hundred eligible Muslims voted.[33] Muslim leaders raised thousands of rupees for the Smyrna Relief Fund, which financed the Ali brothers' campaign to bring pressure on the British Parliament.[34] The Khilafatists successfully isolated the older notable leadership of the community. In 1920, both the Nawab of Surat and the Nawab of Bela con-

sidered running for the provincial council but backed out after realizing that such a step might lead to their social ostracism.[35] Support for the cause was weak only among the Daudi Bohras, where the *da'i*, perhaps anxious to maintain his reputation for loyalty as he entered a series of critical legal cases, used his considerable influence to pressure community members to abstain from donating to Khilafat funds.[36] When Hamdani turned his Bohra English school into a national school, 110 of 140 students withdrew.[37] Bohra cloth merchants refused to sign a pledge that they would not sell foreign cloth.[38] But among others who professed Islam, there was an active and fairly consistent backing for noncooperation up to 1922.

The parallel employment of a syncretic Hindu idiom and a scripturalist Islamic rhetoric clearly facilitated widening involvement in the civic arena of groups that had previously been shut out of municipal and national politics by the language of constitutionalism and progress. But this infusion of religious symbolism into public politics also produced a hardening of political identities along religious lines that ended up working against Gandhian purpose. Most obviously, the dual idiom excluded the Parsis, who before the war had made contributions to public life far beyond their small numbers. No doubt the Parsi community would have been difficult to organize for noncooperation in any case. Many Parsis either worked for the government or collected government pensions. The district's liquor shop contractors, who were severely hurt by the Gandhian movement for abstinence, were virtually all Parsis. And as the municipal franchise expanded, members of the community increasingly depended upon government nominations for representation in the council. To counteract such material inclinations, the noncooperators needed to develop a powerful appeal that would clearly bring Parsis within its fold. This both the Gandhians and Khilafatists failed to do. And once Parsis began to hold aloof from public meetings, processions, and *hartals*, anti-Parsi feeling began to grow in the city, only alienating the Parsis further. Fortunately, Surat—unlike Bombay—never experienced serious anti-Parsi rioting during this time, but the mood of mutual distrust was sufficient to preclude any significant association of the community with the congress cause.

The separateness of Muslim and Hindu symbolic expression within a single movement also produced serious psychic strains among the most active of participants. Even during the noncooperation's strongest moments, some tension existed between the two appeals. Muslim leaders, for instance, had to reconcile militant Islamic rhetoric with the Gandhian principle of *ahimsa*. Often, they were able to do so only with some awkwardness. During one speech in 1921, Sayyid Ahmed Edrus, addressing an audience of Muslims eager to take some more effective

action on behalf of the *khalifa,* suggested that Islam required them to be nonviolent in the present but seemingly held out the possibility that this could change in the future. According to one government account, he argued "that *jihad* was a vital principle of Islam, but it was only permissible under certain conditions and circumstances. At the present moment these conditions were wanting and hence their [the Muslims'] duty was to follow a peaceful, non-violent *jihad* on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi and in the light of the life of the Prophet. The Koran, he added, condemned all disturbances and he quoted a verse to that effect from the book. . . . He advised the local Mussalmans not to lose their heads and to keep absolutely calm at the present juncture."[39] On another occasion, a Muslim teacher was less restrained when, after citing verses from the Quran, he reportedly argued that "if . . . anyone interfered with Islam, the Muhammadans would rather be massacred, massacred, massacred, than to forgo the Khilafat."[40] The meeting's chairman made the teacher sit down, fearing that such language might lead the audience to abandon its calm demeanor and threaten the atmosphere of communal harmony.

Not surprisingly, the Khilafatists were also reluctant to participate in nationalist activities that might alienate Muslims. Ceremonies to commemorate Lokamanya Tilak, a Maharashtrian nationalist with a communalist reputation, were particularly uncomfortable. In 1921, when the local Congress observed the anniversary of the Lokamanya Tilak's death by organizing large processions to the Tapi for bathing, not a single Muslim leader took full part. Narmawala, Edrus, and one other Muslim did come as far as the city square but did not join the crowd in the climactic ceremonies at the riverside. Speakers at public meetings later in the day attempted to deflate the anti-Muslim image of Tilak, but this did little to assuage the serious worries of Muslim participants.[41]

Within the framework of anticolonial agitations, Muslim leaders remained vigilant in guarding what they perceived to be the interests of their community. In January 1922, Muslim leaders of Surat protested the absence of any Muslim participants in a session of a Congress working committee that had met in the city.[42] When a Hindu member of the noncooperating municipality moved a resolution in the council that the slaughter of cattle used for farming and for dairy purposes be banned, Khilafatists objected vehemently that this action would alienate their community and cause the breakdown of Hindu-Muslim unity.[43] The Hindu representatives quickly withdrew their backing for the resolution.

Thus, the Khilafat movement, by calling for the support of Muslims as Muslims in a holy struggle against the British, had clearly strength-

ened the importance of Islamic identity in local politics. Much the same sort of process was occurring among the Hindus, where extensive recourse to devotional and ascetic symbolism also contributed to furthering community awareness. For a brief period of three years, 1919–22, the development of these parallel religious consciousnesses clearly served the purposes of a powerful congress movement. But the cause of *khalifa* collapsed after 1922 with the deposing of the sultan of Turkey by his own countrymen, leaving Muslim noncooperators stunned and Hindu noncooperators embittered at having supported a cause so alien to their own preoccupations. Little remained to tie the two communities together. Once "normal politics" were revived, religious identifications persisted in civic politics, presenting new constraints and opportunities for local politicians, whether sincere or unscrupulous. By the later 1920s, Hindus and Muslims increasingly turned against each other, often violently.

THE RISE OF COMMUNAL POLITICS

The reassertion of representative politics after 1923 allowed communal tensions, almost always submerged during the noncooperation years, to come to the surface. Once the centrality of the provincial council and the municipality in local public life were restored, elites in Surat associated themselves increasingly with interest groupings defined by religious affiliation. Competition between rival elites over jobs, municipal funds and projects, and political power—all conducted within the language of constitutionalism and minority rights—seriously intensified during the later 1920s, creating an atmosphere conducive to violent social conflict.

The development of explicitly communal electorates was particularly important in fostering community-based politics. In provincial campaigns, the voting population was divided into non-Muslim constituencies for the city and the district and a Muslim constituency embracing urban Surat and Ahmedabad. Separate electorates tended to ensure that no candidate in general wards would dare dissociate himself from Hindu causes and that Muslim candidates would be committed to the defense of specifically Muslim concerns. Muslim leaders, recognizing they could easily be branded lackeys of the Hindus if they joined the Congress ticket, held aloof from the Swarajya party. Once in the council, elected Muslims tended to align more with government than with nationalists and were able to win power far beyond their numbers. In the Bombay provincial legislature of 1924–26, two of the three ministers chosen by government were Muslims. These two, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah and Sir Ali Mohammed Khan Dehlavi (brother of the

Nawab of Bela), used their positions repeatedly to frustrate Congress objectives. This in turn led to resentments among Hindu legislators that increasingly assumed a communal tone.

As far as Surat was concerned, the most important policy adopted by the Bombay ministry was its decision to institute separate electorates at the municipal level. Before 1925, provincial government had always guaranteed Muslim representation on the council through the process of nomination, a process that allowed it to continue to select such natural leaders as Sayyid Ali Edrus and the Nawabs of Surat and Bela. The old gentry thus had had little need to reach out to the larger Muslim population of the city; within the council, they pursued a Muslim politics that largely reflected rather limited concerns (two exceptions being the very recent issues of the Muslim graveyards and the Kelapith mosque). Even as the franchise widened in Surat and as the proportion of nominations made by government was reduced, the old notables had not considered advocating separate electorates for Surat, perhaps realizing that such a step would necessitate a transformation in their methods of gaining access to council seats. The decision to create distinct Muslim and non-Muslim constituencies came to Surat largely from outside.

Once this policy was adopted, however, any opposition to it almost inevitably took on a communal character. Immediately after the decision to create separate electorates had been made, Dr. Dixit and Dr. Mehta, two of the city's most prominent noncooperators, sent a letter to the *Bombay Chronicle* objecting to the measure and to delays in setting up municipal elections. Their letter charged that a "Mahommedan Minister [Hidayatullah], fascinated by that nefarious system of communal representation, which has been condemned by all sides, in his enthusiasm to grant communal representation to the Mahommedan community of Surat, which it believed was not so anxious to get it as the Minister was to give it, is probably responsible for this disastrous delay and its consequential events."[44] Dixit and Mehta may not have intended any slight to the community as a whole, but the tone of their objections and those of other Congress leaders clearly upset local Muslims, who saw in these complaints attempts to deprive them of their rights. Several weeks after the publication of Dixit's letter, H. N. Jamadar, a former Khilafatist, wrote a passionate response to the *Chronicle*. "It is painful to see," he argued, referring to the allocation of only eight municipal seats to Muslims, "that even this can not be tolerated by our Hindu neighbors. . . . Let me assure your correspondents that the Mussalmans were always anxious to get it [separate electorates] because of the fact that in the General Constituency they were always at the mercy of their Hindu brothers. I regret to see that your correspon-

dents who are the pillars of the Swarajists in Gujarat should have taken such a hostile attitude toward the Mussalmans." Jamadar argued that *swaraj* could come only if Hindus showed more tolerance: "I . . . ask your correspondents how they are going to achieve their final object without allowing their co-brothers to enjoy their full communal rights which they are gradually getting through such systems as the communal representations and the like."[45] Dixit and Mehta apologized for the careless wording of their original letter but continued to insist that separate electorates were anathema to the cause of Hindu-Muslim cooperation.[46]

Such claims and counterclaims became a regular part of civic politics during the 1920s. With the first municipal campaign under the new election law, the idiom of community concerns assumed new preeminence in the city. On the streets of the city, candidates began to champion the causes of their own communities with increased aggressiveness, knowing that such rhetoric won votes in electorates that coincided with religious groupings. Once in office, Muslim councillors repeatedly appealed to the principle of minority rights, raised fears of discrimination, and evoked the backwardness of their community in calling for greater allocations of political resources and power. Hindu councillors from the Congress party, on the other hand, tended to represent their own opinions as expressing the sentiments of an undifferentiated public or people, but they actually spoke only for Hindus since they were setting themselves against the Muslims' claims to justice. The language of both sides was steeped in the grammar of representative discourse, which allowed for contentions based on both public and communal grounds. As long as the key institutions of the civic polity—the provincial legislature and the municipal council—reinforced religious identification, much local conflict would continue to play itself out in terms of the politics of community. Through this process of defining their interests in terms sanctioned in public culture, one diverse, almost amorphous, group of people—the Hindus—acquired an identity as a majority community that effectively excluded all others from the exercise of power; another almost equally heterogeneous collection of residents—the Muslims—assumed the position of a minority community requiring the protection of government against threats posed by the process of democratization.[47]

Politicians like Dixit and Jamadar no doubt made unintentional contributions to building a society divided along religious lines despite sincere advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity. Other figures, however, had little commitment to communal harmony and felt little hesitation about stirring one community's feelings against the other. As politics in the city became increasingly organized around community concerns, and as

communal conflicts grew ugly in other areas of India, raising fears that similar developments might threaten Surat, such persons won more visibility.

Among Muslims, the elite temporarily displaced by Gandhian politics took the lead in defending their community against Hindus. As soon as noncooperation began to wane, members of the gentry began to reassert their claims to Muslim leadership by critiquing the Khilafatists for placing group concerns at risk in the effort to achieve communal harmony and for dissipating funds that had been collected at the height of the movement.[48] Their effort to resume their leading position in the city often took an anti-Hindu character. During one meeting held in March 1923 under the leadership of Sir Ali Mahommed Khan Dehlavi, Sayyid Ali Edrus, and members of the Nawab of Surat and Nawab of Bela families, a host of resolutions were introduced condemning provocative acts against Muslims in a number of locations around the country and criticizing Arya Samaj efforts to convert Muslims to Hinduism through *shuddhi* campaigns. Narmawala, the Khilafatist, seeing that the meeting was taking a direction harmful to Hindu-Muslim unity, was able only at the last minute to introduce a resolution expressing pleasure at the settlement of communal disputes in several Indian cities.[49] But once the cause of the *khalifa* had crumbled, leaders like Narmawala, Syed Ahmed Edrus, and Fejullahbhai Hamdani really had no powerful Muslim issue with which to mount a counterthrust and became increasingly ineffective figures. The gentry families assumed much of their older preeminence, but their authority was now based less on their loyalty and traditional status—the criteria of natural leadership—than on the assertive advocacy of Muslim interests.

Among Hindus, a similar but more dangerous process began to take shape. Hindu figures who had lost influence during the period of noncooperation, particularly those drawn from the old Home Rule League, assumed new influence in the city by taking up overtly Hindu causes. Particularly prominent among them were M. M. Rayaji, Karsukhram Vora, and Kanaiyalal Desai, all men with high levels of education who had long been committed to creating a political order based upon the principles of representation and moral and material progress. Within that order, however, such individuals were becoming concerned that minority rights should not be confirmed at the expense of the power and influence of the majority. Vora assumed leadership of the local chapter of the Hindu Mahasabha, a national organization devoted to the pursuit of Hindu interests.[50] Rayaji, once president of the local Khilafat committee, now became editor of a newspaper called the *Hindu*, where he called for expanded campaigns to reconvert Muslims to Hinduism,

criticized government for establishing communal electorates and favoring Muslims, lambasted Hindus for weakness in defending themselves against assaults on their dignity and power, and demanded that candidates for municipal election demonstrate what they had done for their community.[51] The Hindu Mahasabhaites maintained a small but vocal presence in the city, never assuming great political power but placing constant pressure on other politicians to associate with Hindu concerns.

In 1927, the development of this increasingly communal politics in Surat came to a head in the first of a series of bloody Hindu-Muslim riots. The initial catalyst of the violence was the decision by the Mahasabha to organize several ceremonies in celebration of the tercentenary of the seventeenth-century warrior king Shivaji, who had carved out a kingdom in Maharashtra at the expense of Muslim states in North India and the Deccan. The key event in this celebration was to be a procession through the streets of the city held on the day fixed as Shivaji's birthday. The purpose of these observances, according to one sponsor of the festivities held in Bombay, was to commemorate a regional king who symbolized "the common heritage of the Hindus or the Aryan people of Bharat Varsha [i.e., India]"[52] and thereby inspire pride within the Hindu community. No doubt the event was intended in part as a statement of cultural resistance to continued British rule. But Shivaji was certainly a strange figure to inspire adulation in Surat. He was remembered in local history as a plunderer of the city's merchants, while Muslims saw him as a Hindu who had undermined the stability of Mughal rule. Many deemed the attempt by Vora, Rayaji, and Desai to hold ceremonies in his honor as a deliberate affront to their community.[53] This the Mahasabhaites denied, arguing there was no anti-Muslim message to the celebrations, only a positive Hindu one. But they made little attempt to adapt their observance to Muslim concerns.

The procession held on the tercentenary morning was not very large, roughly one thousand persons. But it made up for what it lacked in numbers with sheer noise and fanfare. Five different *bhajan* groups played loud music to accompany the singing of Hindu religious songs by the whole crowd. Hundreds waved pictures of Shivaji and Hindu flags. As the procession approached the market of Burhanpuri Bhagal, Muslims became concerned that the noise would continue unabated in front of two mosques in the neighborhood. A few went up to the Hindu leaders in order to ask them to discontinue the music while passing by the mosques. Dr. Rayaji, intent that his community not show any sign of weakness, refused. At this point, people on the balconies of the two mosques immediately began to shower the procession with brickbats and pieces of metal, while others attacked the crowd directly

with clubs. The police rushed to a confused and already somewhat bloody scene unprepared for action. Without securing a firm promise from Rayaji that the music would cease, they decided to accompany the procession past the mosques. This brought a further hail of stones that injured twenty-two constables and eighteen participants in the celebrations. The police fell back, only to be pursued by a group of infuriated Muslims. In a state of panic, the police opened fire, killing one Muslim and one Hindu and injuring three others. When the district magistrate finally arrived with reinforcements, he found two angry crowds of two thousand people apiece facing each other. Order was restored at the scene, but sporadic violence continued elsewhere in the city for the rest of the day.[54]

While the riots reflected tensions that had been building in the city for several years, it was their aftermath that really hardened the lines between the two communities. Politicians who had never identified with communal organizations now clearly took sides. "Local Hindus without distinction of caste or creed," led by M. K. Dixit and M. M. Mehta, responded to Dr. Vora's call to honor the dead Hindu youth by participating in a gigantic funeral procession of nearly twenty thousand persons to the cremation grounds.[55] A similar but smaller procession, attended by all the leading Muslims, was held for the Muslim victim.[56] Dixit, Vora, Kanaiyalal Desai, and Champklal Ghia all agreed to serve on a committee to establish a memorial fund of 100,000 rupees for the Hindu victim; a similar fund was created among the Muslims under the chairmanship of Sheikh Ali Bakza.[57] In each case, some of the city's leading advocates of Hindu-Muslim unity had confirmed in this moment of crisis that their primary loyalties lay with their coreligionists.

Many of the elite participants in the processions and in fund-raising efforts may have had no intention of creating further ill will. Indeed Dixit and Bhimbhai Naik (now a member of the legislative assembly) among the Hindus and Sheikh Ali Bakza and Hafizuddin Khan among the Muslims won praise from the district collector for their efforts to restore calm. In their consultations with district officials, however, they acted primarily as negotiators for their respective communities; indeed, they had little choice but to do so if they wished to be consulted since the collector had chosen them precisely because he regarded them as representatives of their groupings.[58] Only a few of the staunchest Gandhians, most notably Dayalji Desai, adopted a neutral peacekeeping role. But to a great extent, the neutral ground in the formal process of making peace was occupied by the district authorities, while indigenous leaderships found themselves thrust into roles either as Hindu or Muslim leaders. This was certainly one reason why resolving the problem became so difficult.

Among underclasses of the city, the riots had also fostered feelings of mutual distrust and hostility. Muslims were angered that only Muslims were ever brought to trial for the events of the Shivaji tercentenary and that Hindu leaders like Rayaji had gone unpunished for deliberate affronts. Hindus bristled at the fact that unarmed members of their community had been attacked and that the procession had never been allowed to go on to its end. A number of caste *panchayats* ordered the boycott of the shops and services of Muslims, threatening to fine members up to 11 rupees for each violation. Hindu wedding processions, which had traditionally relied on Muslim bands for their music, now went musicless, often leaving the band members with no means of earning their livelihoods.[59]

Until September, there was little threat of renewed violence. But supporters of the Hindu Mahasabha then began to plan new celebrations, this time in honor of the elephant-headed deity Ganapati, that would again involve noisy processions with music passing by mosques. The plans again appeared to be deliberately provocative. While Hindu residents revered Ganapati, ceremonies in his honor had generally been small-scale affairs conducted either privately in homes or by small neighborhood groups. Processions to the river to immerse the images of Ganapati had never before assumed a public, city-wide character.[60] The Mahasabha's leaders, however, now hoped to transform the occasion of the Ganapati observances into a major statement of Hindu pride and defiance (both of local authorities and of the Muslims). Muslims feared the celebrations, because of the possibility that music might again be played in front of the mosques and because of the tradition of anti-Muslim expression associated with the Ganapati celebrations in Maharashtra. Rumors spread that the Mahasabha was planning to import several hundred Maratha toughs into Surat for the festival.[61]

The district administration, under heavy pressure from Muslims not to allow renewed insults to Islam, responded forcefully to these plans. In late August, several weeks before the Ganapati festival, the police issued orders banning the music of brass bands and drums in processions without special permit, allowing only five cymbals and no other instruments to be played within twenty paces on each side of a mosque, prohibiting playing any music in front of the mosque door, and requiring that processions pass by mosques without stopping. Deeming these orders insults to Hinduism, the Mahasabha called for a general *hartal* in the city on the day of the observances and resolved not to take the images of Ganapati to the riverside for immersion as long as the restrictions remained. They also organized huge public meetings—one with an estimated twelve thousand participants—to draft petitions of complaint to the district magistrate and to the Bombay government. The

resolution of a meeting of Hindu women, headed by the wives of most of the city's public leaders, argued that "this public meeting of the Hindu ladies of Surat enters their protest against the notification respecting the Ganpati festival . . . in disregard of the long established custom and elementary right of Bhajan Mandalis [religious processions] in Surat to go along public roads with the accompaniment of music and declares that the notification had deeply wounded the religious feelings of Hindu ladies." The women requested the governor of Bombay to "cancel this order and direct the local authorities not to interfere in future with such established customs and established rights of the people."[62] A petition from another Hindu public meeting suggested that "it seems but reasonable to expect tolerance by one class of citizens for the customs of another class and no Government can tolerate with equilibrium the oppression of the one class at the hands of the other when the former are bonafide exercising their common-law rights enjoyed by them since time immemorial, much less would our benign British Government take any action which would jeopardize such rights."[63]

Muslims put forward their claims in a similar language, appealing to the sanctity of traditional practice and of community rights, both notions enshrined in colonial discourses about India.[64] In essence both sides confirmed through their rhetoric and actions that consideration of religious sentiment, now defined largely in oppositional terms, should be the chief criterion of political justice and that the maintenance of communal pride and self-worth should be the central preoccupation of their politics. Less consciously, both sides confirmed that a third party—the "benign British government"—was responsible for settling intercommunity disputes. Thus, as Hindus and Muslims became increasingly hostile to each other, they reinforced the dominance of colonial understandings of India and indeed of colonial power.

District and provincial authorities, recognizing the potential for explosion, refused to relax the restrictions on processions in Surat. For nearly one year, they waited for Hindus and Muslims to arrive at some compromise. Though some Hindus secretly immersed images of Ganapati in their private wells, most kept their images ready for some grander ceremony. Muslims remained vigilant about offenses to their religion, sustaining a steady pressure on the collector not to rescind his orders. In March, the ceremony of Holi went by without any processions. Meanwhile, the Hindu and Muslim press took up the causes of their communities with increasing vehemence and insensitivity. Finally, the next September, the Hindu rank and file took matters in their own hands and took Ganapati processions out in small groups to the river-

side over a period of several days. Violence far worse than that of the previous May erupted, leaving six dead and ninety-three injured.[65]

With this second round of rioting, the lines were drawn even more sharply than before. Civic leaders like Dixit and Naik, concerned with alienating their Hindu constituencies, drifted closer and closer to the Mahasabha. Muslim politicians correspondingly moved toward the defense of Muslim sentiment. Thus, boundaries that had been drawn during the Khilafat movement were reinforced, hardened, and turned in an antagonistic direction.

The noncooperation movement would not be the last attempt by the Congress to create Hindu-Muslim harmony, but it would be the most successful. When Congress politicians later spoke of representing the people, the public, or the nation, few Muslims considered themselves included because most of those figures had chosen to side with the Hindu community at the critical moment. Necessary to their own survival, most Muslims came to believe, were distinct Muslim organizations and a distinct Muslim political idiom. Even those few who aligned with nationalism in the years before 1947 took great care to maintain a symbolic separateness from their allies.

By 1928 Surti society much more closely approximated colonial renderings of an India torn by irreconcilable religious divisions than ever before. The Gandhian dream of a social order where communities fully respected each other's beliefs now lay in shambles. Moreover, once Hindus and Muslims came to blame each other for their feelings of powerlessness and exclusion, the full dismantling of colonial institutions and values that Gandhi had envisioned in *Hind Swaraj* became increasingly unlikely. Religious conflict directed attention away from consideration of the sort of polity that Surat should have; it confirmed principles of community rights and interests inherent in the language of civic politics. Once communalism began to intensify in Surat, local politicians tended to focus increasingly on securing the greatest possible material and psychic benefits for their own community within the given civil order rather than on questioning, as Gandhi had proposed, whether that order was legitimate.

The British rulers of Surat did not directly create communalism; the production and reproduction of communal sentiment were largely a product of elite conflicts. But Surti politicians worked within a structure of colonial domination that created great constraints on culture construction, even at moments of resistance. Implicitly recognizing that only certain kinds of rhetoric could influence the process of decision making in a polity based upon representative principle, many elite figures put their claims to justice in religious terms. Gandhi's follow-

ers, too, reinforced the social categories of colonial discourse, even as they attempted to dismantle the myths of British civilization and Indian inferiority.

This is not to say that Hinduism and Islam were as alien to the Surtis as the principles of public and national politics. Indeed, religion had resonances for elites and underclass alike that gave it power never possessed by the language of constitutional justice. But it was by no means inevitable that religion would emerge as the focus of *political* conflict within the civic arena. It would have been especially hard to predict before the war—let alone before the beginning of British rule—that Muslims in the city, with their own internal diversity, would rally around the cause of a faraway *khalifa* or that the seventeenth-century raider of Surat, Shivaji, and the elephant-headed figure Ganapati would emerge as the chief symbols of Hindu unity and self-worth in the locality. The Anglo-Indian political order privileged and reinforced rhetorical efforts to develop appeals built around religious solidarity while discouraging attempts to create alternative languages that could challenge the assumptions of colonialism. Local leaderships who pursued their goals within the idiom of communalism often sustained and strengthened their political positions, while those few who fought the general pattern and tried to create some neutral ground became isolated figures without influence. Thus, through everyday political struggles in the institutions of colonial Surat, communally based understandings of the city became received as commonsensical ones, creating the illusion that local society had always been divided sharply along the lines of religion. It was largely as members of communally based collectivities that most Surtis became participants in the public domain.

CONCLUSION

The innovative contributions of Surti politicians to the language of communal politics are more self-evident than they are in the public discourse discussed in the previous chapter. The vocabulary of Hindu assertion and Muslim defensiveness that emerged in Surat was hardly predetermined by colonial sociological thinking; the politics of religious community no doubt left greater scope for originality in the form of metaphors, myths, and scriptural injunctions than the more derivative constitutional idiom. But the appropriation of public rhetoric and the development of communal appeals were actually related aspects of the same processes: the struggle of local elite figures to fight for justice and to achieve political efficacy within the structure of a liberal political system. In accepting the institutions of local self-government and the civic arena as the loci of their political actions, Surti politicians implicitly

agreed to fight their battles with reference to representative conceptions of politics. The idioms of public opinion and of community rights were both conditioned by colonial understandings that assumed power was to be exercised by representative men whose political role was to advance or guard the interests of their constituencies. Some local figures forged identities as leaders of the people and the nation. Others, feeling excluded from these categories, generated self-images as leaders of religious groups defending their communities' civil rights. Both sets of actors, in applying these models of action to local politics, effectively undermined the consolidation of the more thoroughly counterhegemonic culture proposed by Gandhi; both, too, banished the urban underclasses from an effective voice in shaping the political world that would succeed British rule.

It may seem odd to stop at 1928 in a study of South Asian politics, particularly one that purports to describe forces that were at work in the making of India's postindependence democracy. But in a sense the most decisive period of local politics had already passed. For much of the remainder of the colonial era, politics in Surat continued to work largely within rhetorical and ritual paradigms that had already been established by the late 1920s. By 1928 the principles of modernity and of representative government had become incorporated into the dominant language of politics in the civic domain; the linear view of history had won acceptance by local elites as their chief means for understanding political development. And it was impossible for any local politician to ignore the communal allegiances that divided civic politics.

The civil disobedience movement of 1930–34 would of course mark a new resurgence in popular participation in civic politics and of Gandhian cultural meanings. But in many ways civil disobedience was a fundamentally weaker challenge to the colonial hegemony than noncooperation had been. In Surat, local leaderships would never again press the Gandhian vision to the extremes of the early 1920s. The Congress itself had changed. Figures like Dayalji, Kalyanji, and Kunvarji, men who viewed themselves as the Mahatma's disciples and who had never been swayed by the agenda of progress and liberal representation, were marginalized. Ironically, the Congress leadership was assumed in the 1930s by Kanaiyalal Desai, the home ruler who had objected to noncooperation's attempts to attack the institutions of provincial self-government and of colonial primary education, a man who had sided with the Hindu community during the time of the riots. Ultimately, civil disobedience too ran its course, to be overwhelmed by politics managed by men committed to constitutionalism and urban progress. Gandhian principles, which posed a threat to the assumptions of public discourse, became peripheral in the city's politics. More precisely, as

Partha Chatterjee has put it, "Gandhism, originally a product of an anarchist philosophy of resistance to state oppression, itself becomes a participant in its imbrication with a nationalist state ideology."[66] To a great extent, a negotiated version of colonial hegemony had become the new hegemony. While this hegemony would of course be continuously renegotiated over time, the most critical formative period in the making of the city's public culture had already passed.

Conclusion

Government's power is maintained not because of its machine guns, but because of our deluded love for it. This love has taken three forms: Love for the councils, which Dwijendranath Tagore has compared to [Sita's] infatuation for the illusory deer, love for the courts, and love for education. . . . We are very much in the grip of the three above-mentioned infatuations.

MAHATMA GANDHI

The failure of Gandhian cultural meanings to achieve political ascendancy and the countervailing ability of liberal representative cultural meanings to reassert themselves in the civic politics of Surat and of other Indian communities pose a perplexing question for historians of the subcontinent.[1] For if we reject the notion that the spread of liberal democracy is an inevitable result of culture contact with the "West," and if we do not perceive socioeconomic changes sufficiently radical to disrupt precolonial social formations and produce entirely new forms of class relations, then how do we explain the appropriation of "Western bourgeois" cultural forms and the eventual abandonment of forms of discourse that struck such responsive chords in popular culture?

Current historical reasoning often offers little interpretative help in understanding why the politics of Surat and other Indian cities should have been confined within hegemonic bounds. Part of the difficulty rests in the tendency among political historians to emphasize themes of resistance and confrontation at the expense of the conventional and everyday; part lies in the assumption that serious threats to a people's culture and material interests must necessarily lead to some sort of severe challenge to the political order. In Surat, as we have seen, the colonial agenda of progress indeed put key preoccupations of mercantile and artisan communities at great risk as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. Endangerment of core values became particularly acute during World War I when the Bombay administration and the municipality of Surat adopted modernizing measures that not only threatened key personal, familial, and community concerns but also undercut the citizenry's usual means of resistance. But while the effects of the war

were to a great extent responsible for the popular protests of the non-cooperation period, residents of Surat soon allowed an order based upon liberal principle to restore itself, even though the danger to the honor and material interests of traders and artisans persisted. And this despite the ready availability of counterhegemonic cultural meanings provided by the Gandhians.

Of course, one way of dealing with this dilemma is to assume that the Surtis had developed a "false consciousness," cultural meanings and values that not only perpetuated the conditions of their subordination but also failed to reflect their true interests and preoccupations. But to define a group's consciousness as false can be an act of intellectual arrogance; it may assume the superiority of the radical scholar's own moral judgment to those of the subjects of his or her research. It is also often to elude any attempt at explication. There may in fact exist powerful forces that allow the construction of a culture within hegemonic limits, particularly when no realistic signs of a drastic realignment in the political order are in sight.

I have suggested in this book that the willingness of local residents to accept and even perpetuate the hegemony of liberal democracy stemmed largely from colonial domination. More specifically, I have highlighted two objective factors that conditioned the cultural and ideological adaptations of local groupings to British rule. The first of these was the precarious position of the Surtis, particularly the mercantile families, in the larger political system. As moneyed persons with little access to the instruments of coercion, as businessmen whose commerce historically depended upon maintaining a secure political climate, the merchants of Surat had always sought to build stable, enduring relations with the outside rulers who controlled the use of force and the distribution of government favor and disfavor. Rather than leading to revolt, the continuous danger to local culture and livelihoods posed by alien overlords often drove leaderships in Surat to seek closer ties of dependency. Since at least Mughal times, merchants and other urban magnates had involved themselves in reproducing the authority of the warrior groups they deemed most likely to assume positions of power and to offer some promise of security, often by attempting to create deferential bonds that allowed them to establish moral claims to patronage and just treatment. Always this meant adjusting themselves to the political idiom of the ruling group. In this sense, the willingness to work within a liberal representative system can be seen as a part of a continuing process of accommodation to the culture of imperial rulers. The penetration of colonialism into everyday material and cultural life beginning during the later nineteenth century only deepened the Surtis' vulnerability and sense of dependence on the political order and

strengthened their traditional tendencies to work within the institutional and discursive constraints of state power. Thus the very fact of rule by powerful outsiders inhibited local efforts to construct fully counterhegemonic cultures, even at times when conflict between imperial purpose and local preoccupation was greatest.

Certainly no hegemony can be so powerful as to prevent all signs of resistance.[2] And there is ample evidence that the underclasses of Surat were continuously involved in attempts to frustrate the colonizers' efforts to engineer social progress—for example, tax evasion, nonobservance of government regulations, and encroachments on public space. This resistance was supported by principles of popular culture and forms of social identity that worked in opposition to the agenda of improvement and the principles of the liberal order. To this extent, the hegemony of colonial and public principles was always a limited one, one that failed to penetrate very deeply into the society of ordinary folk. But the city dwellers' everyday struggles were always conditioned strongly by their insecure political position. They took place without questioning the central symbols of authority or even the basic terms and assumptions of political debate in the civic arena. For individuals and groups whose place in the political system was always uncertain and dependent, it hardly seemed commonsensical to engage in dramatic confrontations with power when smaller, less dangerous behaviors could often achieve their more immediate purposes. The collapse of noncooperation in Surat can be seen as the quite reasonable behavior of urban peoples unwilling to put their livelihoods at further risk for a cause that was only partially their own and that offered only limited prospects for success.

But if we are to understand how public culture acquired its positive shape, we must turn to much broader factors that affected not only Surat but much of the rest of the subcontinent. This study has stressed above all the peculiarly powerful socializing effects of the institutional and discursive structures developed by the Anglo-Indian rulers. In comparison with the conquerors of many other Afro-Asian regions, the rulers of India appear to have been particularly effective in creating political institutions that seriously constrained the processes of cultural production. Colonial schools and colleges, the court system, and municipal councils and legislative assemblies all worked to ensure, in ways often unanticipated and unintended by nineteenth-century agents of the Raj, the ascendancy of liberal concepts of political representation, the public good, and progress in the subcontinent's central arenas of politics. This study has demonstrated how political practice in and around the local institutions of self-government—Surat's municipality and the Bombay legislature—contributed to the development of a local public

culture. As Surti elites sought to influence colonial administrators, provincial ministers, and others with power in this institutional context, they were drawn into ritual conventions and discursive assumptions with origins in British imperial and parliamentary traditions. Working under the constraints of colonial structures, they developed commitments to a liberal representative and communalist order. To suggest that colonialism exercised a hegemony on the subcontinent is not to say that the British *imposed* their values on Indian elites, for such an interpretation denies the creativity associated with the processes of appropriating and transforming public discourse. The language of modernity, representativeness, and nationalism, after all, served as a vehicle for questioning imperial policies and objectives and eventually for challenging British rule itself. But leaders who sought political efficacy by working in the institutions of civic politics often found the possibility of articulating their goals outside liberal and communal principle a difficult, even absurd, exercise. Those few men and women who remained staunchly committed to the Gandhian agenda, such as Dayalji Desai, would ultimately find themselves marginalized, admired by much of the local population as icons of the national struggle but regarded as figures rather out of touch with the realities of the political world.

In other words, through bargaining with their rulers in a context shaped by the institutions of self-government, the educated elite in Surat came to view liberal and communal reasoning as "common sense"; alternative logics were increasingly rejected as backward, illogical, or unrealistically utopian. We have seen on several occasions how persons in the civic arena were unable to imagine or espouse alternatives to conventional discourses, even when it might have gained them political followers. The leaders of the Home Rule League genuinely sought to create a popular anticolonial movement in the city, but they failed because of their inability to generate cultural meanings of widespread appeal or to loosen their devotion to the values of progress, loyalty, and representative government. The home rulers were simply unable to comprehend the brief period of Gandhian ascendancy. They charged the noncooperators with confusing politics and religion, with undermining programs of modernization that they had worked hard to achieve, with endangering the advance of Indian self-government—in short, with injecting an element of insanity into a nationalist movement to which they were genuinely committed. Those who could make the psychic break needed to embrace the Gandhian idiom, on the other hand, were largely neophytes to the civic arena, unsocialized by the prevailing myths of public politics.

The ways in which the institutional context worked to delimit potential expression is particularly well illustrated in the rather strange ca-

reer of M. K. Dixit, the city's leading political figure during the 1920s. Between 1919 and 1923 Dixit had been an extremely important noncooperator, committed to a Gandhian agenda. He rallied the population to boycott the legislative elections, he helped to sabotage local self-government in the city by insisting on the program of national education, he contributed to undermining the municipality's scheme of universal and compulsory primary education, and he backed a pan-Islamic movement for the sake of securing Hindu-Muslim unity. By the late 1920s, however, he had become a member of the provincial legislature, a staunch advocate of urban reform on the municipal council, a man with close ties to the collector of the district, and a person partially identified with Surat's most significant communal organization—the Hindu Mahasabha. A cynical perspective, of course, might see Dixit as a chameleon who had simply shown different colors at the time of noncooperation. No doubt, he, like most political figures, had opportunist tendencies; he was certainly aware of the audiences he would need to cultivate to maintain his political influence. But he was also consistently committed to fighting for the Indian nation and to representing his city. Pursuing these ends led him into the politics of local self-governing institutions. Once he attained a leading position in these structures, he faced increasing pressures to adhere to communal and liberal rhetorical and ritual paradigms. A close reading of his politics suggests that rather than making constant calculations in order to secure his immediate material advantage, Dixit had undergone a resocialization in which his conceptions of the political world had changed; otherwise he might have been easily able to return to a Gandhian idiom when the civil disobedience movement erupted in 1930. The range of possible ways that he felt he could present himself and his causes had seriously narrowed. In advocating and defending his roles as municipal president, provincial legislator, and spokesman for the people during the 1920s, Dixit came to redefine his values, even his self-identity.

The tale of Dixit is a familiar one to Indian historians (and indeed to observers of the contemporary Indian scene), who are accustomed to seeing once-radical politicians seem to abandon their social commitments and tame their political rhetoric once inside municipal councils, parliamentary halls, and government ministries, and in positions of national leadership.[3] This systematic pattern in late colonial politics suggests that something more than a series of unconnected personal sellouts was taking place. Rather it testifies to the potent conditioning influence of the institutions and discourse of liberal imperialism tied almost inextricably to these institutions. In retrospect, it is now possible to recognize that the most successful colonialisms—the ones that exerted the most complete hegemony over the colonized elite, the ones that left their colonies voluntarily after peaceful negotiations rather

than disruptive revolutions—were often those that had most completely established structures of political representation and self-government. For in these colonialisms elite figures often opted to bargain with and resist their rulers on a political and discursive terrain set by the colonizers' institutions and culture. Independence for these societies often took a form that mid-twentieth century imperialists, whose views themselves reflected the impact of this bargaining with their subjects, would regard as safe, rational, and even legitimate.[4]

India thus ends up bearing some similarity to the Philippines, where imperialists with an even more extreme commitment to inculcating liberal democracy among their subjects assumed positions as colonial rulers at the turn of the twentieth century. In their Southeast Asian colony the Americans set up representative institutions at the local and provincial levels almost from the onset of colonial rule in the effort to coopt the *ilustrado,* the conservative landed and business elite. By 1907, a national legislature had been established. Thus emerged what Peter Stanley has termed the "Fil-American Empire," an imperialism in which the *ilustrado* became virtual junior partners. Within this unusual colonial relationship, the elite made frequent recourse to the same American ideology of "benevolent assimilation" that had sanctioned imperial rule as it struggled to achieve its political interests, greater representative powers, and, eventually, independence. Liberal democracy achieved ascendancy in the islands' central arenas of politics, isolating other potential philosophies and languages on the periphery.[5] The accommodation of the Filipino elite to the discourse of American imperialism sometimes took an exceptionally exaggerated, almost sycophantic, form that most Indian nationalists would surely have found pathetic and contemptible. For instance, at an event in 1938 commemorating the conquest of the islands, Manuel Quezon, the chief architect of Filipino independence and the first president of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, said of the first time he had seen the American flag raised over the Manila Harbor four decades earlier: "Little did I realize then that I was witnessing what in ultimate result may prove to be the greatest event of modern civilization in the Orient. Little did I know in my immaturity that I was beholding the birth of a new ideology in Asia—an ideology based upon what was then a strange, new conception in this part of the world—a conception that government is, 'of the people, by the people, and for the people'—a conception based upon the magic words—liberty and freedom."[6] But the language of liberal representative democracy became the chief ground of contending colonial policies as well as a means of expressing supplication. So successful was the colonial effort of "political education" that, for several decades after independence, Americans would point proudly to the Philippines as

a "showcase for democracy," hinting that their imperial venture (in contrast to those of the Europeans) may not have been such a bad idea after all.

Vietnam provides a striking counterexample to the Philippines and India. There the French gave only limited play to representative institutions, creating a colonial council and a handful of municipalities that gave voice only to a few among the emerging Vietnamese elite. Those who adhered to the Constitutionalist party—the most important organization espousing constitutional tactics—were never more than a tiny coterie of friends and associates. There was always a much larger number of the elite who perceived that they were excluded from council politics, that the political gains of the Constitutionalists were negligible, and that those whose voices were too loud would be subject to direct repression, no matter what language they were speaking. These figures turned increasingly to radical alternatives, most importantly, Marxism. Marxism provided a language of resistance against the French myth of *mission civilisatrice;* it insisted that European colonialism was a selfish, barbaric institution that had as its inevitable objective the plundering of the colonized.[7] But Marxism was also transformed in the process of becoming Vietnamese. Free from the discursive constraints of working within colonial structures, Ho Chi Minh and his comrades fashioned a syncretic rhetoric that evoked sentiment deeply rooted in Vietnamese culture. The use of family metaphors in referring to the relationship of revolutionaries to the people, the conscious evocation of the rich Vietnamese tradition of resistance to foreign oppression, the value placed on folk songs and peasant culture, and the shaping of a revolutionary moral code grounded in a Confucian value system all offered a possibility for creating strong bonds with the peasantry.[8] Marxist revolutionary rhetoric seems to have achieved in Vietnam a success that Gandhism never accomplished, in part because the liberal alternative was so thoroughly discredited by its obvious inapplicability to French colonial rule. Radicals inspired by this indigenous form of Marxism led the Vietnamese peasantry in a violent revolution that compelled the French to leave after the decisive defeat at Dienbienphu, and ultimately produced a communist state closely aligned with the Soviet Union.

Such a brief comparative sketch can hardly capture the full range of factors that contributed to the development of political culture within these three societies. It sets aside such complex issues as the relationship between material interest and cultural production, the role of resistance from below, and patterns of individual variation among the elite, all issues that have figured in this study of Surat. Most important, in its sketchiness, it obscures the everyday processes of struggle and negotiation by which men and women among the colonized gave shape to

their cultures. But it does suggest a broad hypothesis that might prove worth testing in other studies. To return to the typology developed in the first chapter of this book, liberal imperialism encouraged cultural accommodations to colonialism that were within hegemonic limits, it discouraged the production and spread of fully counterhegemonic languages that could inspire confrontation with colonial power, and often it successfully left its mark on postcolonial society in the form of representative institutions and an elite committed to constitutionalism and evolutionary progress. By contrast, in colonies that had experienced more repressive imperial regimes, where elite figures felt that their political mobility and access to power were blocked, the psychic and institutional legacies of imperialism were often more easily challenged and dismantled.[9]

India's democracy was thus a product of a liberal, imperialist form of colonial domination, but at the same time it did not merely replicate the liberal values and institutions that existed in Britain. For this study has also shown how the culture of politics in Surat acquired very particular characteristics as a result of having been produced under colonial circumstances. This is true in at least two different senses. First, peculiarly colonial aspects of the cultural practices and sociological understandings of the ruling group made their way into the symbolic behaviors of indigenous elites, giving the latter a unique flavor. To Western liberals, Surat's public culture might have appeared a rather strange amalgam of seemingly contradictory elements, including some they might have labeled progressive, others as feudal, hierarchical, and aristocratic. The same Raj that spurred representative government and urban improvement also fostered natural leaders, British (then Anglo-Indian) social clubs, at-home parties in the house of the district collector, *Sardars* and *Rao Bahadurs*, durbars and elaborate forms of ritual dress for imperial ceremonies. These elements sometimes fused in rather striking combinations in the politics of the civic arena. Thus, in the midst of a powerful nationalist challenge to British rule, local leaders of home rule would still feel compelled in 1919 to join in the pomp of imperial peace celebrations to prove their loyalty to the empire. Seven years later, M. K. Dixit, then known as one of the city's leading noncooperators, outdid all of his predecessors in the municipal presidency by organizing a spectacular welcome for Leslie Wilson, the governor of Bombay, a ceremony filled with many of the trappings of the grandest durbars. To use Benedict Anderson's striking phrase, colonialism imparted to Asia and Africa a "tropical gothic" style, one that made its way into the culture not only of the rulers but also of the elite among the ruled.[10]

More important, the unique configurations of liberal democracy stemmed from the creative adaptations by elite politicians to the fact

that public culture had struck such shallow roots in local society.[11] Surat's civic culture was, I have shown, an elite culture; it marked a narrow sphere where educated Indians bargained with and cajoled their colonial rulers, a sphere with its own special terminology and rituals. The most profound hegemonic effects of liberal imperialism, in other words, extended over a limited domain and a limited number of persons with the greatest access to the central arenas of power. Deeper in Surti society, there were social forms influenced by a very different cultural vocabulary: honor and respectability, *dharma*, social deference, caste, and community. It is too simple to see such principles as precapitalist or feudal remnants of an earlier age, as outmoded values to which the Surtis stubbornly clung. These notions, after all, informed economic relationships critical to the functioning of local mercantile capitalism; they gave meaning to householders confronted by the disruptive agenda of progress and improvement. And ironically, their importance in local life was reinforced by the workings of colonial institutions, particularly the courts, which privileged certain indigenous concepts such as caste, religion, and hereditary authority in settling disputes. In short a variety of processes joined together to ensure the continued reproduction of precolonial idioms of power and the limited penetration of public culture into merchant and plebeian society.

For many Surtis, the language of civic expression thus proved to be inaccessible and esoteric, sterile and unemotive. As a consequence the ideology of liberal representation, which in theory advocated the participation of all citizens in politics, in practice excluded the majority of city dwellers from the central processes involved in constructing the new political system of the late colonial era. The local elite, too, contributed to the marginalization of the population by setting rules and procedures in meetings and organizations that limited civic expression and by failing to forge or embrace more populist forms of rhetoric grounded in the principles that gave meaning to city dwellers' daily lives.

At the same time, however, elite figures in India could not afford to be cut off from indigenous culture, either emotionally or politically. The fact that they sought power in a polity based upon representative principle compelled them at the very least to seek out votes and to develop some kind of following. If they were to continue to deny underclass groupings direct access to public culture, they nonetheless needed to devise alternative methods for building support. In Surat, local politicians often accomplished these ends through bilingual politics, employing one idiom in the civic arena, others in addressing ordinary city dwellers. They paid deference to local magnates, built temples, fostered a sense of obligation among voters by providing *pan* and *bidi* or by offering rides to the polls in private cars, and played upon commu-

nity ties. Within the municipality, even as they approved the colonial agenda of improvement, they softened the impact of this agenda for members of their social groups through obstructionist tactics and wire-pulling. All these techniques served to extend their influence into local society, though they also further reinforced the distance of the under-class from the language of discussion and debate in the civic arena. Again, there is no reason to assume in every case a deliberate duplicity on the part of members of the local elite for behaviors that at times appeared antithetical to their avowed public commitments. Rather these behaviors reflected a contradictory consciousness that stemmed from the elite's needs to function in very different kinds of social arenas.

More ominously for Surat and India, there were strong pressures for politicians under such circumstances to resort to the language of religious sentiment and communal fear. Communalism, more than any other kind of rhetoric, evoked principles that had meaning in both the outer and inner arenas. Civic politics recognized the right of religious communities to advance their political concerns and to protect their traditions of worship and custom, and all the subcultures of Surat's diverse social groupings emphasized the importance of religious feeling and identity. Communalist rhetoric was not determined by either colonial sociology or indigenous "tradition" but was an all-too-creative adaptation by local politicians to their participation in a representative polity established from above. Given the reception that communal appeals received in the 1920s (in colonial circles and among the local population) and their tendency to become accepted as common sense, it is no wonder that they would resurface over and over again thereafter in the subcontinent's politics. It is also not surprising that the most successful populist challenges to the dominance of English-educated politicians in the representative institutions of postindependence India would commonly be built around calls to caste and religious community.

Both patterns are familiar ones in writings on colonial and postcolonial democracies. In the Philippines, the idiom of liberal representation and popular rights has been centered most strongly on a public political arena controlled by the wealthy landed and business elite; it has served rather unsuccessfully as a basis for underclass claims to land and political power. Filipino politicians have sustained their position of privilege by fostering an idiom not unlike that of the Indian elite, one based upon familial and personal obligations and ties of ritual kinship. Political bilingualism has encouraged the development of a vertically oriented factional politics that reproduces the power of a few families in a larger representative polity.[12] Similarly, scholars working on a wide range of regions in Africa and South and Southeast Asia have written

extensively of the growth of "tribalism" and other forms of ethnic conflict in polities based upon formally democratic principles. In some instances in East Africa, one scholar has argued, universal suffrage "even seems to have created a sense of tribal identity which did not exist before."[13]

Thus "corruption," "factionalism," "tribalism," and "communalism"—those features of African and Asian politics which are often portrayed as obstructing progress or eating away at the vitals of democracy—are hardly remnants of traditional social patterns that will eventually be overcome by liberal values. Rather they are products of the rhetorical and practical adaptations of indigenous leaderships to the needs of representative systems they have been "granted" by their colonizers. These patterns of behavior may in fact be essential to the perpetuation of liberal polities where the languages of progress, civic duties, and representation offer limited scope for the cultivation of truly popular support.

Perhaps the most important test of democracies that have grown out of colonial contexts rather than out of demands from deeper within society is whether liberal political idioms will ever be able to articulate the interests of the underprivileged peoples. Can the underclasses fully appropriate the symbolic skills necessary for the success of their movements, skills that have often been the monopoly of those with many years of formal education in the European style? Or will they remain dependent on elite spokespersons and on forms of resistance that partly check the state and dominant groups but make little contribution to the formal shape of the political system? The experience of India after independence offers no simple answer. While the country has certainly seen a variety of movements in recent years in which subordinated groups have seized the linguistic tools of the liberal order, these movements have been far outweighed by the efforts of dominant elements in Indian society, often led by spokespersons articulate in the idioms of representative politics and communalism. A more satisfactory order may come about only if and when the underclass generate their own language for directly contending many of the dominant assumptions of the civic polity and for inspiring action against that polity.

This study suggests, unfortunately, that there is no necessary progression either to the opening up of liberal polities to underclass causes or to the development of alternatives to liberal representative systems. Instead it has shown how the dependence of colonized peoples on colonial institutions may lead them to work within a set of cultural constraints that reproduce their subordination, constraints that they themselves may have helped to construct. If there is any lesson that this study offers, it is that hegemony is not easily broken. The development

of counterhegemonic languages requires acts of imagination that those who must cope daily with the existing forms of domination are frequently unable to muster. Those who somehow manage to generate innovative cultural meanings must convince others working within existing structures to abandon dominant assumptions; they must also persuade subordinate groups outside these structures that popular material and emotive needs will be met through courses of action that may involve great risk. Yet ultimately, it is men and women who give shape to their culture, not the larger structures in which they live. In this reality lies the possibility that cultural orders may yet develop that provide greater scope for social justice and for a genuinely democratic participation in the shaping of the political world.

It would be presumptuous for an academic of American descent to suggest courses of thought and action for Asians and Africans to follow. He or she can at best hope to contribute in some limited way to the collective process of questioning the absolutism of the prevailing codes of political thinking. Thus if I have returned to the "grand" themes of history, it has not been to capture their grandness; if anything, a fairly bleak picture has been offered here. Rather, the purpose has been to unravel the dominant Western assumption that liberal democracy flows inevitably out of human nature, that it represents the culmination of the processes by which the world's peoples have sought to capture a voice in making their political environment. Once democracy in its current forms is recognized as contingent upon particular forms of domination rather than being a natural outgrowth of universal human drives, once it is shown to suppress some forms of expression while it permits others, the task of imagining alternative democracies may not seem so formidable.

APPENDIX

TABLE A1 Proportion of Population Born in Surrounding District for Seven Cities of the Bombay Presidency, 1921

City (1)	*District (2)*	*No. per thousand living in (1), born in (2)*
Bombay	Bombay City	160
Karachi	Karachi	395
Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	603
Poona	Poona	603
Sholapur	Sholapur	636
Hubli	Dharwar	785
Surat	Surat	813

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921*, vol. 8, *Bombay Presidency;* vol. 9, *Cities of the Bombay Presidency.*

TABLE A2 Males/Total Population in Seven Cities of the Bombay Presidency

	Males as Percentage of Total Population
Bombay	65.6
Karachi	61.4
Ahmedabad	56.7
Poona	55.2
Sholapur	52.8
Hubli	52.6
Surat	52.5

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921*, vol. 8, *Bombay Presidency;* vol. 9, *Cities of the Bombay Presidency.*

TABLE A3 Age Distribution in Seven Cities of the Bombay Presidency Compared with the General Population of the Presidency, 1921

	0–15	*15–25*	*25–35*	*35–45*	*45–55*	*55 and over*
Bombay	211	235	294	159	67	34
Ahmedabad	316	199	214	140	79	52
Karachi	318	198	229	138	71	46
Poona	331	194	195	139	81	60
Sholapur	367	182	194	123	77	67
Hubli	347	178	200	128	82	65
Surat	350	187	180	132	85	66
General population	394	152	180	126	81	67

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921,* vol. 9, *Cities of the Bombay Presidency,* pt. 1.

TABLE A4 Occupational Composition of Surat City, 1921

	No. of Workers and Dependents (per thousand)
Pasture and agriculture	28
Industry	467
Transport	24
Trade	202
Public administration	21
Professions	72
Private income	17
Domestic service	53
Insufficiently described	96
"Unproductive"	13

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921,* vol. 9, *Cities of the Bombay Presidency,* pt. 1.

TABLE A5 Industrial Population Relative to Total Population in Seven Cities of the Bombay Presidency

	No. of Workers and Dependents (per thousand)
Sholapur	546
Ahmedabad	514
Surat	467
Hubli	385
Bombay	312
Poona	194
Karachi	175

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921,* vol. 9, *Cities of the Bombay Presidency,* pt. 1.

TABLE A6
Population of Surat, 1872–1921

Year	*Population*
1872	107,855
1881	109,844
1891	109,229
1901	119,306
1911	114,868
1921	117,434

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921,* vol. 8, *Bombay Presidency;* vol. 9, *Cities of the Bombay Presidency.*

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NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Bombay Archives (now Maharashtra State Archives)
BC	*Bombay Chronicle*
BSPA	Bombay Secret Police Abstracts
FD	Financial Department
GD	General Department
GM	*Gujarat Mitra*
HD	Home Department
RD	Revenue Department
CW	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
NAI	National Archives of India
IOR	India Office [Library] Records
P&J	Political and Judicial Files
SMR	*Surat Municipal Record*
TI	*Times of India*

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. These comments stem from a recent rereading of Edward Said's *Orientalism,* particularly pp. 27–28. Said himself refers to Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950,* p. 376.

2. "Petition, Hardevram Haridas to Chief Secretary, Government of Bombay, 19th April, 1893," BA, GD, 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. 1, p. 199.

3. The notion of "culture in the making" is adopted from Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab.*

4. For instance, see the work of Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* Because of the focus here on how the concept of the public was used in historical practice, my usage is also quite different from that of the journal *Public Culture.* Though I know its editors, Arjun Appadurai and

Carol Breckenridge, quite well, the approach and title of this work were developed independently before I was aware of their project.

CHAPTER 1

1. The part epigraph is from Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* p. 18.

2. Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," pp. 1–8.

3. The most explicit treatment of Western education in India is Bruce McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism.* However, rather than single out particular works, I think it more important to note the pervasiveness of this perspective in Euro-American thinking about the development of liberal democracy in India and elsewhere.

4. Much of this list is adapted from Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition,* p. 3.

5. For a few prominent examples of this approach, see C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization;* David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind,* and *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance;* Rudolph and Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition.* All these studies on India make interesting and important historical arguments, but the strongest do not depend on modernization theory.

6. For a critique of modernization theory, see Dean C. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Study of National Societies: A Critical Perspective."

7. The classic conceptions are found in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Colonialism,* esp. pp. 35–41, 45–53, 81–87; A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism;* and B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes.*

8. This approach was not confined to Marxist scholars. S. N. Mukherjee, e.g., argues in his "Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815–38," that "this interest in public affairs . . . sprang from a social transformation brought about by a number of factors, chiefly the economic changes in the eighteenth century. The society was being transformed from a status and relatively closed society . . . to a relatively open and competitive society where social relationships were largely shaped by class" (p. 35).

9. Some historians have suggested that commercial capitalism in India grew out of indigenous conditions and emerged before the advent of British rule; others have posited the continuity of precapitalist or precolonial social relations during the colonial period itself, even in the midst of economies geared largely to the production of goods for the market. For example, Frank Perlin, "Proto-Industrialization and Precolonial South Asia"; C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars;* and Rajat and Ratna Ray, "The Dynamics of Continuity in Rural Bengal under the British Imperium."

10. Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India,* p. 751.

11. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World,* a work which clearly breaks out of the mold of all previous major studies of nationalist ideology. Chatterjee argues that the context of domination was critical to In-

dian thought and culture, though he does not attempt to establish a model of causation.

12. For work on the use of political symbols and values in western India see, e.g., Ghanshyam Shah, "Traditional Society and Political Mobilization"; Howard Spodek, "On the Origins of Gandhi's Political Methodology"; and Richard Cashman, *The Myth of the Lokamanya.* A pathbreaking work in the analysis of political interests in specific regions was Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism.*

13. See, e.g., John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, and Anil Seal, eds., *Locality, Province and Nation;* and C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics.*

14. This summary is drawn largely from Anil Seal, "Imperialism and Nationalism in India." Not all members of the Cambridge school, however, accepted all features of the model Seal suggested. The quote is from p. 6.

15. Seal, "Imperialism and Nationalism in India," pp. 3–14.

16. Bernard S. Cohn, "Anthropology and History in the 1980s: Toward a Rapprochement," and "Representing Authority in Victorian India"; Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule;* Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown,* and "From Little King to Landlord"; Lucy Caroll, "Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Associations"; Richard Fox, *Lions of the Punjab;* Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community,* esp. chap. 2; and David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation,* pp. 9–10.

17. The most important works informing my theoretical perspective here are Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci;* Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order;* Robert Q. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh;* Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll;* Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought;* T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony"; David Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba;* and Ian Lustick, "Becoming Problematic."

18. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy,* p. xi.

19. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture,* p. 107.

20. Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," esp. pp. 573, 578.

21. See particularly Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order,* pp. 92–95; Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh.*

22. This argument is especially informed by Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony."

23. Use of the word *bilingual* here is largely a simplification for descriptive purposes. I certainly do not mean to suggest by this term that either indigenous culture or colonial ideology was univocal.

CHAPTER 2

1. Earlier an Indian official had briefly been president.

2. "Commissioner, Northern Division, to Chief Secretary to Government, G.D., Bombay, 23rd March 1889," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, p. 49.

3. "Memorial, Secretaries, Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha to Secretary, G.D., Bombay, 27 March 1889," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, pp. 96, 99.

4. "Memorial, Secretaries, Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha to Secretary, G.D., Bombay, 27 March 1889," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, pp. 96–97.

5. "Commissioner, Northern Division, to Chief Secretary to Government, G.D., Bombay, 23rd March 1889," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, pp. 47–48.

6. "Assistant Collector, Surat, to Secretary, G.D., 6th October 1888," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, p. 148.

7. "Commissioner, Northern Division, to Chief Secretary to Government, G.D., Bombay, 23rd March 1889," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, p. 49.

8. "Assistant Collector, Surat, to Secretary, G.D., 6th October 1888," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, p. 151; "Collector, no. 2784, dated 6 Oct. 1888," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, p. 157. Some of the words in this letter were not clear in the original.

9. Some readers may consider the use of the word *mad* extreme in this case. But see p. 214.

10. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought,* p. 44; J. G. A. Pocock, "Languages and Their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought," p. 15, and "Introduction: The State of the Art." Equally relevant here is the notion of discourse employed by Michel Foucault in numerous works, including *Discipline and Punish,* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge;* and by Said, *Orientalism.* See also Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture,* esp. pp. 29, 107.

11. Pocock, "Introduction: The State of the Art," esp. pp. 6–7.

12. For an extensive discussion of ethnohistorical methodology which informs such arguments, see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790.*

13. Sandra Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion,* p. 14. Sizer in turn draws on the work of Kenneth Burke, such as *The Rhetoric of Religion* and *Language as Symbolic Action.* Among others who have influenced my theoretical perspective are Robert Paine, "When Saying Is Doing"; Abner Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man;* A. P. Cohen and J. L. Comaroff, "The Management of Meaning"; and Peter J. Bertocci, "Models of Solidarity, Structures of Power." While all of these works have been extremely helpful, each exaggerates the speaker's capacity to "manipulate" an audience through rhetoric and underplays the commitments a speaker may develop through rhetorical practice.

14. The term *symbolic action* is used by Burke in *The Philosophy of Literary Form,* pp. 296–301; *management of meaning* comes from Cohen and Comaroff, "The Management of Meaning."

15. See Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion,* pp. 14–16.

16. This paragraph is influenced by Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice;* and G. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice."

17. For similar conceptualizations, see W. H. Morris-Jones, "India's Political Idioms"; Mukherjee, "Caste, Class and Politics"; and esp. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Discussion: Invitation to a Dialogue," pp. 374–75.

18. For example, Bernard Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command."

19. Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule;* and Gregory C. Kozlowski, *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India.*

20. Of course, the elite may become totally assimilated into the ruling group, but such cases are rare in the annals of European colonialism owing to colonial racism and the subsequent psychic costs involved in removing oneself from indigenous social groupings.

21. This application of Gramsci is derived in part from Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony"; and Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture,* esp. pp. 104–8.

CHAPTER 3

1. *GM,* 23 September 1900, pp. 2–3.

2. Perlin, "Proto-Industrialization and Precolonial South Asia," p. 33. For an initial effort to apply this approach to Gujarat, see David Hardiman, "State, Community and Capital in Gujarat, 1400–1900."

3. John Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689,* p. 131.

4. For a sound treatment of the various estimates of Surat's population during the precolonial period, see Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, c. 1700–1750,* p. 29.

5. Surendra Gopal, *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat, 16th and 17th Centuries: A Study on the Impact of European Expansion on Precapitalist Economy,* pp. 121–45; B. G. Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century,* pp. 84–89. For discussions of Gujarat's trade in the Indian Ocean, see Gopal, pp. 1–74; Michael N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat,* pp. 7–16; Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, c. 1700–1750,* pp. 3–6, 69–74, and "Indian Merchants and the Trade in the Indian Ocean." For the role of moneylenders in the precolonial countryside of Gujarat, see Hardiman, "State, Commerce and Capital," p. 21.

6. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat,* pp. 125–27; Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century;* Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* chap. 2. For the character of Surat's mercantile elites, see particularly two essays of Das Gupta, "The Merchants of Surat, c. 1700–1750," and "Indian Merchants in the Age of Partnership, 1500–1800." Despite their disagreements with Das Gupta, Dwijendra Tripathi and M. J. Mehta essentially confirm this picture of heterogeneity and differentiation for the precolonial period in their essay, "Class Character of the Gujarati Business Community," esp. pp. 156–57.

7. For the *mahajans* of Gujarat, see Shirin Mehta, "The Mahajans and the Business Communities of Ahmedabad"; Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat,* pp. 123–24; and Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* pp. 86–88.

8. BA, *Surat Factory Diary,* vol. 32 (1795): 383–84.

9. I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 196.

10. BA, *Surat Factory Diary,* vol. 32 (1795): 381–82.

11. K. N. Chaudhuri, "The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries"; Gopal, *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat,* pp. 218–37; Tapan Raychaudhuri, "Non-Agricultural Production: Mughal India"; and Lakshmi Subramanian, "Capital and Crowd in a Declining Asian Port City."

12. Hyden uses this term in *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania.* I use the term somewhat more broadly than Hyden, referring to economic relationships based

upon a wide variety of social ties. I do not accept the notion that affective relations are "precapitalist" since they may serve as effective forms of adaptation to certain forms of capitalism.

13. See Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* pp. 134–70, and "Trade and Politics in Eighteenth Century India," pp. 187–96.

14. Neil Rabitoy, "Sovereignty, Profits and Social Change"; V. A. Janaki, *Some Aspects of the Historical Geography of Surat,* pp. 52–83; Bombay, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency: Gujarat,* vol. 2, *Surat and Broach* (hereafter referred to as *Surat Gazetteer*), pp. 57–58. Despite repeated assertions made about Surat's "decline" during this period, the nineteenth-century economic history of the city has never been systematically examined. For a consideration of the more general factors that affected Indian commerce during the early nineteenth century, see D. R. Gadgil, *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times, 1860–1935,* pp. 33–46; and more important, Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars.*

15. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* p. 29; and *Surat Gazetteer,* pp. 315–18.

16. In 1895, nearly two-thirds of the city's income tax revenues derived from trade or commerce. Nearly all the top taxpayers fell into these categories. "Report on the Working of the Income Tax Act II of 1886 in the Northern Division during 1894–5," in BA, FD, 1896, vol. 48, comp. 235, p. 41.

17. The figures on industrial employment in Bombay are probably low because of the large number of residents reported as "insufficiently described." Even if it were possible, however, to determine where the members of this category should be allocated, it is unlikely that the proportion of those employed in industry would be higher than the corresponding figures for Surat. See *Census of India, 1921,* vol. 9.

18. *Census of India, 1921,* vol. 9, pt. 2, pp. cli–clii.

19. For instance, see "Administration Report of the Collector of Surat, 1895–6," in BA, RD, 1897, vol. 28, comp. 1528, pt. 6, pp. 26–27; "Collector's Report, 1909–1910," in BA, RD, 1911, vol. 11, comp. 511, pt. 10, p. 27.

20. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* p. 42. An interview with Ashwin Modi, Surat, 1979, was also helpful.

21. For Surat's domestic markets, see *Surat Gazetteer,* pp. 179–180; S. M. Edwardes, *A Monograph upon the Silk Fabrics of the Bombay Presidency,* pp. 26, 46; R. E. Enthoven, *The Cotton Fabrics of the Bombay Presidency,* p. 23; J. Nissim, *A Monograph on Wire and Tinsel in the Bombay Presidency,* pp. 10–11; and D. R. Gadgil and R. K. Patil, *Gold and Silver Thread Industry in Surat,* p. 1.

22. For Surat's markets up to the early colonial period, see Janaki, *The Historical Geography of Surat,* pp. 58–59; Subramanian, "Bombay and the West Coast in the 1740s"; and Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India, 1784–1800,* p. 145. International markets for Surti handicrafts in the early twentieth century are described in "Collector's Report, 1898–9," in BA, RD, 1900, vol. 33, comp. 137, pt. 5, pp. 10–11; "Collector's Report, 1899–1900," in BA, RD, 1901, vol. 55, comp. 137, pt. 5, pp. 22–23; "Collector's Report, 1909–1910," in BA, RD, 1911, vol. 11, comp. 511, pt. 10, p. 27; *Bombay Provincial Banking Enquiry, 1929–30,* 3:50; and Gadgil and Patil, *Gold and Silver Thread Industry,* pp. 12–13.

23. "Collector's Report, 1909–1910," in BA, RD, 1911, vol. 11, comp. 511, pt. 10, p. 27.

24. For Surat's pearl industry, see particularly *GM,* 11 April 1909, p. 8.

25. *Journal of Indian Art* (April 1887): 15–16, quoted in R. K. Patil, *Gold and Silver Thread Industry of Surat,* p. 4; and Nissim, *A Monograph on Wire and Tinsel,* pp. 10–11. For the *jari* industry in the late colonial period, see Haynes, "The Dynamics of Continuity in Indian Domestic Industry."

26. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* pp. 71–73. The expansion in the trade in cotton and grain is documented in Janaki, *The Historical Geography of Surat,* chap. 5.

27. "Report on the Working of the Income Tax, 1894–5," in BA, FD, 1896, vol. 48, comp. 235, p. 41.

28. "Petition of Merchants and Traders Dealing in Cloth to President and Councillors of the Municipality of Surat," in *SMR,* 1907–8, pp. 85–89.

29. The delineation of levels of trade in this description has been influenced by C. A. Bayly, "Indian Merchants in a 'Traditional' Setting."

30. R. D. Choksey, *Economic Life in the Bombay Gujarat (1800–1939),* p. 199.

31. *Bombay Provincial Banking Enquiry, 1929–30,* vols. 3 and 4 *passim.*

32. An educational census taken in Surat during World War I revealed that in high-caste areas heavily populated by merchants and government servants, well over half the eligible school-age children attended municipal primary schools (up to 80%). Only one-third attended in some areas peopled by petty traders and artisans. *SMR,* 1918–19, p. 140.

33. For structural changes brought about by English policy during the eighteenth century, see S. Arasaratnam, "Weavers, Merchant and Company"; and Hameeda Hossain, "The Alienation of Weavers."

34. Government of Bombay, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed under Government Resolution #1128 Dated March 1873 to Inquire into the Working of the Cotton Frauds Act (IX of 1863) with Minutes of Evidence and Other Appendices.*

35. See Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* pp. 71–73.

36. "Collector's Report, 1899–1900," in BA, RD, 1901, vol. 55, comp. 137, pt. 5, p. 22.

37. *GM,* 11 April 1909, p. 8.

38. Haynes, "The Dynamics of Continuity in Indian Domestic Industry." See also D. R. Gadgil, "Gold and Silver Thread Industry of Surat" (written in 1930), in Gadgil and Patil, *Gold and Silver Thread Industry.*

39. Haynes, "The Dynamics of Continuity in Indian Domestic Industry."

40. See chap. 4.

41. Gadgil and Patil, *Gold and Silver Thread Industry,* p. 8.

42. "Report on the Working of the Income Tax Act, 1894–95," in BA, FD, 1896, vol. 48, comp. 235, p. 41.

43. *Bombay Provincial Banking Enquiry, 1929–30,* 3:20–172; and *Surat Gazetteer,* p. 191.

44. Gadgil and Patil, *Gold and Silver Thread Industry,* p. 81.

45. *Bombay Provincial Banking Enquiry, 1929–30,* 3:20–172, 4:456–65.

46. *SMR,* 1908–9, p. 132.

47. Tripathi and Mehta, "Class Character of the Gujarati Business Community"; also M. J. Mehta, "Some Aspects of Surat as a Trading Center," p. 249;

Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat*, p. 173; Rabitoy, "Sovereignty, Profits and Social Change," p. 173; and for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *GM*, 10 May 1908, p. 2; and Govindbhai H. Desai, *Hindu Families in Gujarat*, pp. 58–60.

48. See chap. 7.

49. These two patterns of growth are discussed in Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development;* and C. A. Bayly, "Town-Building in North India, 1790–1830."

CHAPTER 4

1. For arguments that systematically examine the character and impact of law during the colonial period, see David A. Washbrook, "Law, State and Agrarian Society in Colonial India." For the role of British policy in reinforcing caste and community in an urban setting, see Frank Conlon, "Caste, Community and Colonialism: The Elements of Population Recruitment and Urban Rule in British Bombay, 1665–1830."

2. F. G. Bailey, *Gifts and Poison: The Politics of Reputation*, pp. 4–8. The term "moral community" has been used with great profit by C. A. Bayly in "Indian Merchants in a 'Traditional' Setting," pp. 185–87, though the application of Bailey's notion here is somewhat different than in Bayly's essay.

3. Bertocci, "Models of Solidarity, Structures of Power," pp. 97–126; C. Wright Mills, "Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive."

4. While I use *jnati* here as a rough equivalent for *jati* (endogamous unit of the caste system) in other areas of India, it must be recognized that in Gujarati the term refers to caste on many levels. It is also difficult to define the endogamous unit in the region neatly, since only the broadest of these levels approaches perfect endogamy. For the complexity of the caste system in urban Gujarat, and the difficulty of defining the endogamous unit, see A. M. Shah, "Division and Hierarchy." Shah suggests that in Gujarat there is no single endogamous unit but "several units of various orders with defined roles in endogamy."

5. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 9, pt. 1 (hereafter *Bombay Gazetteer*), p. xiv; *Surat Gazetteer*, p. 319, gives these figures by caste in 1872: 8,988 Brahmans, 11,559 Vaniyas, 3,717 Shravaks (Jains), 420 Kayasths, and several hundred members of other high castes.

6. Shah, "Division and Hierarchy."

7. Dhansingh Thakorsingh, "Suratno Prachin Itihas," vol. 2, provides a street-by-street breakdown of the castes and occupations of Surti residents. The pattern of residence in 1935 corresponds closely to that suggested for the eighteenth century by Das Gupta in *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat*, pp. 31–33.

8. Govindbhai Desai, *Hindu Families in Gujarat*, pp. 18–19, 181–82, discusses the overlap between Jain and Hindu social forms in Gujarat. Unfortunately, historians have never probed very far in discussing the cultural interaction between Jains and Hindus in the region.

9. This corresponds to Das Gupta's findings for the eighteenth century. Personal communication, 1981.

10. For the case of Thakordas Balmukandas Modi, who worked as a clerk in the firm of Atmaram Bhukan before becoming a prosperous cotton merchant and a major philanthropist, see I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 204. For Naginchand Jhaverchand, see *GM,* 31 March 1918, pp. 12–13.

11. This discussion is indebted to C. A. Bayly, "Old-Style Merchants and Risk," and *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars,* chap. 10.

12. *GM,* 24 April 1890, p. 385.

13. For a discussion of *dharma* among the Vaishnavas in Gujarat that pays some attention to the flexibility of the concept, see N. A. Thoothi, *The Vaishnavas of Gujarat,* chap. 2.

14. The most important work on the ideology of Brahmanical Hinduism is Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus.* Ronald Inden, *Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture,* provides a case study on the ideology of caste in a specific regional and historical context.

15. For Jain philosophy, see Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification;* Dayanand Bhargava, *Jaina Ethics.* For sociological approaches to the Jains, see Marcus J. Banks, "Defining Division"; and Vilas Adinath Sangave, *Jaina Community,* esp. pp. 64–85, 194–298, 313–73.

16. For Gujarati Vaishnava belief, see Thoothi, *The Vaishnavas of Gujarat,* esp. chap. 5; for an anthropological study of Gujarati Vaishnava belief and practice, see David F. Pocock, *Mind, Body and Wealth.*

17. Gokhale describes the Vaniya life-style in seventeenth-century Surat in *Surat in the Seventeenth Century,* pp. 35–45.

18. See Edalji Barjorji Patel, *Suratni Tavarikh,* for early information on the *panjrapol.*

19. For this point, I am grateful to discussions with Hanna Papanek.

20. *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 72.

21. Ibid., passim; *Surat Gazetteer,* p. 183–84.

22. For the notion of "symbolic capital," see Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* p. 195.

23. Thakorsingh, "Suratno Prachin Itihas," vol. 2.

24. I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 203.

25. Ibid., pt. 1, p. 134; Thakorsingh, "Suratno Prachin Itihas," vol. 1, p. 232.

26. I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 143.

27. See pp. 121–26.

28. See, e.g., Bayly, "Old Style Merchants and Risk," and *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars,* chap. 10; Susan Nield Basu, "Pachaiyyappa Mudaliar"; David West Rudner, "Religious Gifting and Inland Commerce in Seventeenth-Century South India"; Susan Lewandowski, "Merchants and Kingship."

29. Though Bayly's work on northern India suggests the existence of powerful cross-caste merchant organizations there as well. See "Indian Merchants in a 'Traditional' Setting," and *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars,* pp. 174–83.

30. Shirin Mehta, "The *Mahajans* and the Business Communities of Ahmedabad," p. 182.

31. William Foster and Charles Fawcett, eds., *English Factories in India, 1668–9,* 13:190–92, 205; M. N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat,* p. 122; Sushil Chaudhury, "The Gujarati Mahajans." See also chap. 5. Less concrete evidence suggests the existence of these organizations several decades earlier; see Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat,* p. 125.

32. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* p. 87, and "Indian Merchants in the Age of Partnership," pp. 35–36.

33. Tripathi and Mehta, "Class Character of the Gujarati Business Community"; Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers of India,* p. 123.

34. *GM,* 16 November 1913, p. 3.

35. *GM,* 15 October 1899, pp. 3–4.

36. Hopkins, "Ancient and Modern Hindu Guilds."

37. *GM,* 16 November 1913, p. 3.

38. Hopkins, "Ancient and Modern Hindu Guilds," p. 188.

39. Ibid., p. 195.

40. Ibid., p. 189.

41. Ibid., p. 193.

42. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* pp. 87–88n.

43. *GM,* 15 October 1899, pp. 3–4.

44. Hopkins, "Ancient and Modern Hindu Guilds," p. 191.

45. Ibid., p. 193.

46. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat,* pp. 123–24; Hopkins, "Ancient and Modern Hindu Guilds," p. 180.

47. *GM,* 3 March 1912, p. 18.

48. *GM,* 10 August 1902, p. 11; 23 August 1903, p. 6. For the *Nagarsheth* Family, see I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, pp. 209–14.

49. *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, pp. 207–8.

50. For newspaper accounts of Mahajan meetings, see *GM,* 30 September 1900, p. 16; 14 October 1900, p. 8; 9 December 1906, p. 3.

51. Hopkins, "Ancient and Modern Hindu Guilds," p. 180.

52. Ibid.

53. *GM,* 30 September 1900, p. 16.

54. At times the competition to feed the *mahajan* was considerable. See *GM,* 8 April 1906, p. 3.

55. *GM,* 18 February 1912, p. 3.

56. *GM,* 1 April 1906, p. 4; 24 April 1910, p. 11; 8 May 1910, p. 7.

57. *GM,* 30 September 1900, p. 16; 14 October 1900, p. 8.

58. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* p. 69.

59. M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* p. 40.

60. *GM,* 8 April 1906, p. 3.

61. *GM,* 30 September 1900, p. 16; 14 October 1900, p. 8.

62. *GM,* 17 September 1899, p. 15; 1 July 1900, p. 8; 28 January 1900, p. 2.

63. E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century."

64. The 1795 protest has been examined in great depth by Subramanian, "Capital and Crowd in a Declining Asian Port." For the protest of 1848, see

Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement; on the 1891 protest, see *GM,* 22 February 1891, pp. 196–98.

65. *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 1, p. xiv. Thakorsingh, "Suratno Prachin Itihas," vol. 2, passim.

66. Harry Borradaile, *Borradaile's Gujarat Caste Rules.* Many of these castes no longer accept the names by which they were known in the late nineteenth century. The Golas, for instance, are now called the Ranas; the Kanbis term themselves Patidars. As far as I have been able to determine, these names were not in general use in Surat before World War I.

67. For instance, see *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 1, p. xiv. Interviews with contemporary residents strengthened these impressions.

68. Thakorsingh, "Suratno Prachin Itihas," vol. 2, passim.

69. See *A Report of the Surat Riot Case with Opinion of the Local Press.*

70. *GM,* 16 September 1906, pp. 2, 12.

71. Bombay State, *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement,* p. 12.

72. Haynes, "The Dynamics of Continuity in Indian Domestic Industry."

73. *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 183.

74. For a similar argument, see Gyan Prakash, "Becoming a Bhuniya."

75. A. B. Trivedi, "The Gold Thread Industry of Surat."

76. Hopkins, "Ancient and Modern Hindu Guilds," pp. 193–97; Thoothi, *Vaishnavas of Gujarat,* p. 192.

77. Thoothi, *Vaishnavas of Gujarat,* pp. 126–30; *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency: Gujarat,* vol. 4, *Ahmedabad* (hereafter *Ahmedabad Gazetteer*), p. 112.

78. *Surat Gazetteer,* p. 321; see also Hopkins, "Ancient and Modern Hindu Guilds," p. 192.

79. In 1906, members of a Bhavsar *jnati* living in Sagrampura, traditionally dyers of cloth, appealed in court that the headman's monopolization of caste vessels was unfair, arguing that all members should have the right to use the vessels. *GM,* 12 July 1906, p. 13. The position of the headman was supported in court.

80. *GM,* 16 September 1906, pp. 2, 12.

81. *GM,* 20 November 1910, pp. 10–11.

82. In a memorandum, Frederick Lely, once a district officer in Surat, wrote: "When I was Collector of Surat, the Hindu Ghanchis made a caste-law that the drinking of liquor at their feasts be stopped. It was a common notoriety at the time that the Government contractor of the district, or his agent, when they came to know of this, bribed the caste leaders by offer of free liquor and otherwise to abandon their position." "Memorandum by the Hon. F. S. P. Lely, 10 Jan. 1904," in BA, RD, 1905, vol. 9, comp. 729, p. 209.

83. Satish C. Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat,* esp. chaps. 6 and 7.

84. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* pp. 75–77; N. Benjamin, "Arab Merchants of Bombay and Surat (c. 1800–1840)," demonstrates that Arab merchants were still important participants in the trade of western India in the early nineteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, there seem to have been few Arab merchants remaining in the city.

85. Bela was a small principality in the Deccan. In the late nineteenth cen-

tury, the *nawab* of this kingdom married one of the daughters of the Nawab of Surat and moved to the city. The so-called Nawab of Surat was not a direct descendent in the male line from the old rulers of the city but had established ties with the immediate family of the Nawab through intermarriage. See Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, pp. 245–47.

86. For a discussion of the Muslim communities of Gujarat, see *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 2; Misra, *Muslim Communities of Gujarat;* for residential patterns in Surat, Thakorsingh, "Suratno Prachin Itihas," vol. 2.

87. For *sharif* culture, see Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation,* pp. 24–26, 35–36.

88. For a short description of the Mughal aristocracy's way of life in Surat during the seventeenth century, see Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century,* pp. 53–54.

89. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* vol. 1, p. 17; *Surat Gazetteer,* pp. 157, 188; Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* p. 35; *GM,* 12 August 1906, pp. 16.3, 16.4.

90. "Letter from Nawab to Chief of English Factory at Surat," in BA, *Surat Factory Diary* 33 (1795): 360.

91. Abdul Kadir Kafiz Nuruddin and Sharafuddin N. Sharaf, *The Patani Co-operative Credit Society Souvenir,* pp. 83–87.

92. *SMR,* 1873, p. 19.

93. Ali Ashgar Engineer, *The Bohras,* pp. 152, 161; *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 2, p. 28; Karim Muhammad Master, *Mahagujaratna Musalmano,* pp. 133, 143; Mianbhai Mulla Abdul Husain, *Gulzare Daudi for the Bohras of India,* pp. 87–89.

94. For the nature of the Bohra theology, see Engineer, *The Bohras,* pp. 36–61; Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat,* pp. 14–19.

95. Engineer, *The Bohras,* pp. 117–22, 135; S. C. Misra, *Muslim Communities of Gujarat,* chap. 2, passim; Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Competitive Modernization within the Daudi Bohra Sect of Muslims and Its Significance for Indian Political Development," p. 153.

96. Engineer, *The Bohras,* pp. 159–61.

97. Henry G. Briggs, *The Cities of Gujarashtra,* p. 47.

98. Engineer, *The Bohras,* pp. 28, 156–59.

99. *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 2, p. 32.

100. *GM,* 5 July 1903, p. 18; 27 December 1903, p. 15.

101. *Surat Gazetteer,* p. 319.

102. David L. White, "Parsis in the Commercial World of Western India, 1700–1750." For the case of Rustomji Manekji, see Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* p. 81; also I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, pp. 240–42.

103. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* pp. 49–50; Christine Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India;* esp. pp. 2–3; Dosabhai Framji Karaka, *History of the Parsis,* 2:47–145; Delphine Menant, *The Parsis of India,* 1:71–89, passim.

104. I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, pp. 234–38; for one important family which made the transition from commerce to government service, see Karaka, *History of the Parsis,* pp. 21–23.

105. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat,* p. 218.

106. Karaka, *History of the Parsis,* 1:205; for an explanation of Parsi philanthropic traditions, see two essays by White, "Parsis in the Commercial World of Western India," and "Eighteenth-Century Parsi Philanthropy."

107. Karaka, *History of the Parsis,* 2:8–39.

108. For the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay, see Conlon, "Caste, Community and Colonialism," pp. 196–98; James Masselos, *Toward Nationalism;* Karaka, *History of the Parsis,* 1:205–42; Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India,* pp. 99–112; Henry G. Briggs, *The Parsis, or the Modern Zerdusthians.*

109. *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 2, p. 244.

110. Karaka, *History of the Parsis,* 2:19–20; also Robert Laming, *Representative Men of the Bombay Presidency,* p. 116.

CHAPTER 5

1. *GM,* 1 September 1918, p. 11.

2. For useful treatments of deference, see Howard Newby, "The Deferential Dialectic"; Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics,* chap. 3; J. G. A. Pocock, "The Classical Theory of Deference."

3. Michael Adas, "From Avoidance to Confrontation."

4. Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707–1740;* M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb.*

5. Foster and Fawcett, *The English Factories in India,* 13:191.

6. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance,* and "Resistance without Protest and without Organization." James Scott and Benedict Kerkvliet, "Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance in Southeast Asia." Especially valuable in this collection is the essay by Michael Adas, "From Footdragging to Flight: The Evasive History of Peasant Avoidance Protest in South and Southeast Asia," pp. 64–86.

7. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat,* p. 187.

8. John Fryer, *John Fryer's East India and Persia,* pp. 245–46.

9. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb,* pp. 143–44, 151.

10. François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire,* 1:224.

11. Abu'l Fazl Allami, *The A'in-i Akbari,* pp. 166–67; Ram Prasad Khosla, *Mughal Kingship and Nobility,* p. 277; Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," pp. 168–70.

12. Khosla, *Mughal Kingship and Nobility,* pp. 278–79.

13. M. De Thévenot, "Indian Travels of Thévenot," p. 27.

14. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 197.

15. John Jourdain, *The Journal of John Jourdain, 1608–1617,* p. 132.

16. William Hawkins, "The Journals of William Hawkins"; Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615–1619.* There are dozens of references to local gift giving in the records of the company.

17. Foster and Fawcett, *English Factories in India,* 3:205.

18. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers,* p. 126.

19. Ibid., pp. 149–50.

20. Ibid., chap. 5; Karen Leonard, "The 'Great Firm' Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire"; see also Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C. A. Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India."

21. Foster and Fawcett, *English Factories in India,* 13:190–92, 196–97, 205.

22. Algemen Rijarchief, quoted in Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* p. 129.

23. For a more complete picture of Surat's government and the various groups staking claims to the city's revenues, see Michelguglielmo Torri, "Social Groups and the Redistribution of Commercial Wealth."

24. Subramanian, "Capital and Crowd," pp. 205–38; also "Bombay and the West Coast in the 1740s," pp. 189–216; and Michelguglielmo Torri, "In the Deep Blue Sea." Torri has now demonstrated that the local elites who aligned themselves with the English during this period were extremely diverse and that not all Vaniyas sided with the company, in "Surat during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century."

25. Das Gupta, "Trade and Politics in Eighteenth Century India"; Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat,* pp. 134–55.

26. For examples of the rhetoric of free trade, see Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India,* pp. 138–39, 144, 163, 171; see also Torri, "In the Deep Blue Sea," pp. 269–73. For a discussion of these issues at the all-India level, see D. A. Washbrook, "Progress and Problems," esp. pp. 75–76.

27. Torri, "In the Deep Blue Sea," pp. 270–75; Subramanian, "Capital and Crowd," and "Bombay and the West Coast during the 1740s"; Leonard, "The 'Great Firm' Theory," pp. 160–63; Holden Furber, *John Company at Work,* pp. 218–19.

28. Furber, *John Company at Work,* pp. 216–22.

29. For instance, Torri, "Social Groups and the Redistribution of Commercial Wealth," p. 58.

30. K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East Company, 1660–1740,* p. 125.

31. Furber, *John Company at Work,* p. 214; the reference to the abolition of taking gifts by company officials comes from a personal communication from Michelguglielmo Torri.

32. *Surat Gazetteer,* pp. 132–33n.

33. Subramanian, "Capital and Crowd," pp. 214–18; Rabitoy, "Sovereignty, Profits and Social Change," pp. 173–75.

34. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 196.

35. Thakorsingh, "Suratno Prachin Itihas," 1:233.

36. Rabitoy, "Sovereignty, Profits and Social Change," pp. 173–80.

37. This event is explored in great detail in Subramanian, "Capital and Crowd."

38. "Petition of the Shroffs and Mahazins of the City of Surat on the behalf of Themselves and Other Hindu Inhabitants," in *Surat Factory Diary* 33 (1795): 383.

39. "Translation of Note from the Mowlah of the Bohras," in *Surat Factory Diary* 33 (1795): 330.

CHAPTER 6

1. The part epigraph is from *Appendix to the Report of the Education Commission. Report by the Northwestern Provinces and Oudh Provincial Committee* (Calcutta

1884), p. 202, quoted in Bruce McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism.*

2. The notion of the "world system of cultural domination" comes from Richard Fox, "Gandhian Socialism and Hindu Nationalism." This term should not imply any pattern of homogenization in world culture. Instead, I argue that associated with European political domination were dominant values and principles to which indigenous peoples had to adjust. The cultural accommodations to these values were quite diverse.

3. A particularly valuable survey of these ideologies is in Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men.*

4. For instance, see D. C. Moore, "Political Morality in Mid-Nineteenth Century England," esp. 20–26; T. J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England;* J. B. Parry, "The State of Victorian Political History."

5. Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics,* esp. chap. 8.

6. David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation,* pp. 9–20; Cohn, "Representing Authority in British India."

7. Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress;* the coexistence and reconciliation of this concept with ideas that celebrated British tradition in the writings of nineteenth-century Whig historians is explored in J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent.*

8. Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men.*

9. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere;* Patricia Hollis, *Pressure from without in Early Victorian England;* Joseph Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution;* J. A. W. Gunn, "Public Spirit to Public Opinion"; J. G. A. Pocock, "The Varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform: A History of Ideology and Discourse."

10. L. T. Hobhouse, *Democracy and Reaction,* p. 220.

11. For a very rich and extended treatment of the notion of representation in the thought of nineteenth-century liberals, see Hannah Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation,* chap. 9; and Samuel H. Beer, "The Representation of Interests in British Government."

12. John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in *Three Essays by John Stuart Mill,* p. 15.

13. John Stuart Mill, "Representative Government," in *Three Essays by John Stuart Mill,* p. 204.

14. L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism,* pp. 68–69.

15. See Said, *Orientalism,* for similar arguments about the larger conception of the Orient.

16. John Strachey, *India,* p. 5.

17. Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest,* p. 6.

18. J. Ramsay McDonald, *The Government of India,* p. 1.

19. Lord Dufferin, quoted in *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918,* p. 69.

20. A brief but very useful treatment of these ideas is found in Fox, *Lions of the Punjab,* pp. 148–53.

21. Lytton to Salisbury, 11 May 1876, quoted in Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," p. 191.

22. McDonald, *The Government of India,* p. 72.

23. Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India."

24. See esp. Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community,* pp. 56–62.

25. Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India."

26. *Speeches Delivered on Moving the First and Second Readings of the Bombay Local Boards Bill and the Bombay District Municipal Act Amendment Bill Introduced for the Advancement of Local Government in the Presidency of Bombay by the Honorable J. B. Peile,* pp. 4–5.

27. Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India,* and Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India,* examine and critique the myth of Muslim backwardness.

28. Robert Eric Frykenberg, "The Concept of 'Majority' as a Devilish Force in the Politics of Modern India."

29. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy,* p. 3.

CHAPTER 7

1. Several historians have stressed that the British ruled urban centers through persons they perceived as leaders of local society. See particularly C. A. Bayly, "Local Control in Indian Towns"; and Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856–1877,* esp. chap. 6.

2. The most useful discussion of factors shaping British conceptions about what constituted natural leadership is in Freitag, *Collective Action and Community,* chap. 2. For a somewhat parallel treatment of an earlier period, see Conlon, "Caste, Community, and Colonialism."

3. *Source Material for a History of the Indian Freedom Movement,* pp. 1–16.

4. Ibid.

5. *Surat Gazetteer,* p. 157.

6. For the early character of the colonial revenue structure, see Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* pp. 11–12. Also important to this discussion is Eric Stokes, "The First Century of British Colonial Rule in India: Social Revolution or Social Stagnation?" 148–49.

7. "Revenue Commissioner of Surat to Bombay Government, 22 Feb. 1808" and "Resolution of the Bombay Board, 11th March 1808," in BA, *Revenue Diary* 61 (1808): 849–51, 855.

8. Peter Harnetty, *Imperialism and Free Trade,* esp. chap. 4; Bayly, *Local Roots of Indian Politics,* p. 11; Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* pp. 11–15.

9. *Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army in India;* and Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow,* chap. 4.

10. For general treatments of local self-government in India, see Cecil Merne Putnam Cross, *The Development of Self-Government in India, 1858–1914;* and Hugh Tinker, *The Foundations of Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma.* For case studies of municipal development, see Susan Lewandowski, "Urban Growth and Municipal Development in the Colonial City of Madras, 1860–1900"; *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1975): 341–60; Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires, 1808–1931;* and Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow,* pp. 75–144.

11. Rich residents of the city, e.g., felt little need for an improved water supply, perhaps because they obtained water from tanks underneath their houses. As a result, few supported the development of a water-supply system of

which the poorer residents in outlying neighborhoods would be the chief beneficiaries. The poor usually had to obtain water (often brackish) from the Tapi River at low tide. *SMR,* 1883, p. 30.

12. For the Surtis' apathy and even opposition to municipal sanitation policies, see particularly *SMR,* 1885, pp. 63–64, 72.

13. For the city survey and opposition to it, see *SMR,* 1868, p. 3; 1877, pp. 67–69.

14. For the famous Kanpur mosque incident, see Freitag, "Religious Rites and Riots," pp. 184–94; for riots in Banares in which angry crowds destroyed municipal property and attacked the homes of municipal councillors after hearing of municipal plans that involved altering a temple, see *GM,* 23 April 1891, p. 412.

15. See, e.g., *SMR,* 1871, p. 24; BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379; *GM,* 9 November 1890, pp. 1074–75. For the present argument, it is less relevant that the council did not carry out most of these proposed policies than that it considered them, since even consideration posed a threat to indigenous values. David Arnold in a recent article has effectively argued that, during the late nineteenth century, efforts to control disease and improve sanitation involved a sustained "colonial assault on the body" that raised serious resentments in a "society in which touch connoted possession or pollution." "Touching the Body."

16. *SMR,* 1916–17, p. 223.

17. "Revenue Commissioner of Surat to Bombay Government, 22 February 1808," in BA, *Revenue Diary* 151 (1808): 849–51.

18. *Indian Taxation Enquiry Committee,* 2:272. For an especially strong case of resistance to the imposition of house taxes, see Richard Heitler, "The Varanasi House Tax Hartal of 1810–11." Heitler also argues that the house tax was not accepted because it involved entering houses to make assessments. For Delhi's resistance to the house tax, see Das Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires,* pp. 140–43.

19. *Source Material for a History of the Indian Freedom Movement,* pp. 19–22.

20. Ibid., pp. 29–49.

21. *SMR,* 1872, p. 20; 1894, p. 97; 1895–96, pp. 9–17; 1902–3, pp. 77–83; *GM,* 2 May 1898, p. 2.

22. For papers relating to the house-tax battle, see BA, GD, 1892, vol. 97, comp. 600; 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600; 1895, vol. 101, comp. 1041; *SMR,* 1895–96, pp. 9–17. This movement is discussed further in chap. 8.

23. This discussion has been influenced in part by Peter Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa." There are major differences, however, between my approach and Ekeh's.

24. Tinker, *The Foundations of Local Self-Government,* pp. 29–30.

25. For an early history of Surat's local body, see the municipality's own publication, *Surat Shaher Sudharai Shatabdi Granth,* pp. 8–10, 16–33. This account includes the proceedings of the first meeting of the council.

26. *SMR,* 1871, p. 4

27. *SMR,* 1894, p. 6.

28. *SMR,* 1895, p. 1.

29. *GM,* 2 September 1888, p. 476; 17 April 1898, p. 2.

30. "Acting Collector, Surat to Commissioner, Northern Division," in BA, GD, 1888, vol. 90, comp. 351, p. 458.

31. *SMR*, 1869, p. 15.

32. *GM*, 1 July 1906, p. 1.

33. *GM*, 8 January 1899, p. 2; 23 December 1900, p. 2.

34. *SMR*, 1868, p. 1.

35. *GM*, 23 December 1900, p. 2.

36. *GM*, 27 December 1891, pp. 1296–97.

37. See, e.g., Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics*, p. 101; and Francis Robinson, "Municipal Government and Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces, 1883 to 1916," 389–94.

38. See, e.g., BA, GD, 1895, vol. 101, comp. 1041, pp. 126–27; 1909, vol. 117, comp. 110, pt. 2, p. 555. For British recognition of this situation, see "J. K. Spence to Secty. to Government, G.D. (April 1899)," in BA, GD, 1901, vol. 7, comp. 347, p. 80.

39. BA, GD, 1911, vol. 144, comp. 1172, p. 375.

40. "Petition of the Committee Appointed by a Public Meeting of the City Municipality, 1 June 1892," BA, GD, 1892, vol. 97, comp. 600, p. 86.

41. BA, GD, 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. 1, pp. 4–5.

42. For somewhat conflicting interpretations of the government's actions, see *GM*, 8 April 1894, p. 2; 13 September 1908, pp. 2–3.

43. *GM*, 9 November 1890, p. 1073.

44. David Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660–1960*, p. 164.

45. *GM*, 30 October 1910, p. 2.

46. *GM*, 1 July 1906, p. 1.

47. *GM*, 28 January 1906, p. 8; 1 July 1906, p. 1.

48. *GM*, 11 February 1906, p. 7.

49. *GM*, 12 October 1913, p. 2.

50. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat*, pt. 3, pp. 147–48; *GM*, 14 May 1899, p. 3; 17 November 1901, p. 1.

51. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat*, pt. 3, p. 232.

52. *GM*, 1 July 1906, p. 1.

53. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat*, pt. 3, pp. 147–48.

54. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat*, pt. 3, p. 232.

55. This finding parallels the conclusions of Susan Lewandowski that merchants who acted as modernizing agents in the commerce of nineteenth-century Madras continued to be concerned with maintaining their standing in "traditional" groupings, and continued to accomplish this goal through traditional forms of gift-giving. See "Merchants and Kingship," pp. 151–80.

56. *GM*, 7 April 1918, pp. 7–8.

57. *GM*, 18 February 1906, p. 14.

58. *GM*, 8 October 1899, p. 8.

59. *GM*, 21 October 1900, p. 14; 4 February 1906, p. 13-1; 17 June 1906, p. 10.

60. *GM*, 16 November 1890, p. 1100.

61. For Parsi traditions of charity, see Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, vol. 1, pp. xxii–xxiv.

62. Karaka, *History of the Parsis,* vol. 2, pp. 140–45; *Surat Shaher Sudharai Shatabdi Granth,* pp. 18, 22; *SMR,* 1899–1900, p. 83; 1902–3, p. 101; 1904–5, p. 64.

63. *Surat Shaher Sudharai Shatabdi Granth,* pp. 19–20; *SMR,* 1869, pp. 22–23.

64. *SMR,* 1869, pp. 22–23.

65. Fryer, quoted in Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century,* p. 53.

66. *SMR,* 1910–11, pp. 26–30.

67. For examples of the visits of imperial dignitaries to Surat, see *GM,* 9 November 1890, pp. 1073–75; 11 November 1894, pp. 2–4; 11 November 1900, pp. 1–2, 9–12; 1 September 1901, pp. 16–20; 5 March 1911, pp. 2–4.

68. For example, *GM,* 1 September 1901, pp. 16–20.

69. *GM,* 23 September 1900, pp. 2–3.

70. *GM,* 2 November 1902, p. 10.

71. *GM,* 8 October 1911, p. 2.

72. *GM,* 2 November 1902, p. 11.

73. *GM,* 12 July 1894, pp. 1–2.

74. *GM,* 4 March 1900, p. 1; 11 March 1900, p. 2.

75. *GM,* 19 May 1901, pp. 8–11.

76. BA, GD, 1901, vol. 14, comp. 633, pp. 111–13.

77. "Weir to Secty. to Governor, G.D., Bombay, 29 July 1901," in BA, GD, 1901, vol. 14, comp. 633, p. 127.

78. I. I. Desai, *Muktinun Parodh,* p. 10.

79. *GM,* 12 July 1894, p. 1.

80. *GM,* 27 June 1909, pp. 12–12b.

81. I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 148.

82. *Source Material for a History of the Indian Freedom Movement,* pp. 29–49.

83. Quoted in BA, JD, 1896, comp. 1893, p. 66. Excerpts viewed in the office of the Secretary's Gazetteers, Bombay.

84. BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, p. 151.

85. *GM,* 3 September 1893, p. 904.

86. The text of this proclamation is available in S. V. Desika Char, *Readings in the Constitutional History of India,* pp. 299–300; see also Bernard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," pp. 165–66.

87. *GM,* 22 February 1891, pp. 196–98.

88. BA, JD, 1896, comp. 1893, p. 62; excerpts viewed in office of the Secretary's Gazetteers, Bombay.

89. For instance, see *GM,* 16 August 1903, p. 7; 4 February 1906, p. 13a.

90. *GM,* 9 November 1893, p. 1178.

91. *GM,* 9 November 1890, p. 1073.

CHAPTER 8

1. In using the term *elite* in reference to the most highly educated in the city, I mean to suggest only the privileged place these figures came to enjoy within the civic arena and as intermediaries between the colonial rulers and local society. Within Surti society, many of these figures were far less influential

than the most substantial *sheths* and other urban magnates. I hope that my narrative also makes clear that it is these persons who constituted the "elite" and not the larger caste groupings from which they came.

2. Thakkoram Kapilram Mehta, *Vadnagar Nagaro: Nagarona Prachin ane Arvachin Itihas Sahit Suratna Vadnagar Nagar Grahastha Kutumboni Vanshali,* p. 15.

3. For the Anavil Brahmans, see Jan Breman, *Patronage and Exploitation,* esp. pp. 32–33, 98; Klaas van der Veen, *I Give Thee My Daughter,* pp. 8–16.

4. See pp. 96–97.

5. The movement of the Vaniyas into English education and the professions more generally in Gujarat is substantiated in Neera Desai, *Social Change in Gujarat,* pp. 59, 414–27; Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India,* p. 162.

6. For the beginnings of English education in Surat, see I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 1, pp. 139–40. For education in the Bombay Presidency more generally, see Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India,* pp. 33–40; Ellen E. McDonald and Craig M. Stark, *English Education, Nationalist Politics and Elite Groups in Maharashtra, 1885–1915.*

7. For the best study of the process of English education in India, see the excellent work by David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation.*

8. In 1886, for instance, there were five doctors, five lawyers, one newspaper editor, and one high school master, but only three businessmen, among the fifteen elected councillors. In 1896 five doctors, four lawyers, and six "merchants, contractors and private gentlemen" won elective office. In 1914, soon after the number of seats open to election had risen to twenty, eight lawyers, three doctors, one newspaper editor, five merchants, and three landlords were chosen by the voters. And even the elected merchants, landowners, and private gentlemen were often people with a great deal of English education. *SMR,* 1886, p. 102; *SMR,* 1896, p. 93. I collected much biographical information on the municipal councillors of Surat from the files of the Centre for Social Studies, Surat. My thanks to Dr. Ghanshyam Shah, who provided me with access to this material.

9. For the house-tax struggle in Surat, see BA, GD, 1892, vol. 97, comp. 600; GD, 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. I; GD, 1895, vol. 101, comp. 1041.

10. See C. A. Bayly, "Patrons and Politics in Northern India"; Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics.* For Surat, note, for example, the role of Parsis as brokers of the English in the Mughal court. *Bombay Gazetteer,* vol. 9, pt. 2, pp. 196n, 197n.

11. "No. 1699 of 1893, G.D., Bombay, May 1893," in BA, GD, 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. 1, p. 212.

12. I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 1, pp. 189–90; pt. 3, pp. 34–35; Nuruddin and Sharaf, *Patani Co-operative Society Souvenir,* p. 136; interview with Chandravadan Shah, 1980.

13. I. J. Catanach, *Rural Credit in Western India,* pp. 99–102.

14. P. T. Parikh, *A Brief History of the Cooperative Movement in Surat District,* esp. pp. 6–7.

15. *GM,* 8 September 1901, p. 1.

16. *GM,* 5 March 1911, p. 2.

17. *GM,* 9 January 1898, p. 2.

18. "Memorial from the Secretaries, Praja Hit Vardhak Sabha to Secretary to Government, G.D., Bombay, 27 March 1889," in GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, pp. 96–97.

19. *GM,* 5 August 1906, p. 2.

20. *GM,* 19 July 1903, p. 7; 26 July 1903, p. 1; 22 July 1906, p. 8.

21. "Petition from the Committee Appointed by the Public Meeting of the Inhabitants of Gopipura, 1 June 1892," in BA, GD, 1892, vol. 97, comp. 600, p. 87.

22. "Secretary, Gopipura Ward Committee, Surat to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 19 April 1893," in BA, GD, 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. 1, p. 199.

23. *Native Opinion,* 7 August 1892, quoted in BA, GD, 1892, vol. 97, comp. 600, p. 81.

24. *GM,* 27 December 1891, p. 1298.

25. "No. 1699 of 1893, G.D., Bombay, May 1893," in BA, GD, 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. 1, p. 212.

26. "Remarks on the Draft Municipal Act, 1899, 6 April 1899," in BA, GD, 1901, vol. 7, comp. 347, p. 33.

27. "Surat Collector's Letter, no. 32, 20th Jan. 1893," in BA, GD, 1892, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. 1, p. 65.

28. "Letter from Collector of Surat to Chief Secty, to Government, G.D., Surat 28th July 1892," in BA, GD, 1892, vol. 97, comp. 600, pt. 1, p. 36.

29. "No. 1699 of 1893, G.D., Bombay, May 1893," in BA, GD, 1893, vol. 92, comp. 600, pt. 1, p. 212.

30. Ibid.

31. "Petition from Chandrashankar Bhimanand, Chairman of a Meeting held at Vithalwadi, dated 26th September 1909," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, p. 177.

32. BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, p. 63. The following treatment parallels to some extent Dipesh Chakrabarty's interesting analysis of the "spastic" nature of trade-union organizations in Calcutta. See *Rethinking Working-Class History, Bengal,* chap. 4.

33. *GM,* 11 October 1888, p. 617.

34. BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, p. 91.

35. For instance, see *GM,* 31 January 1915, p. 7.

36. The concept of nation as an "imagined community" is developed in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.*

37. For instance, see *GM,* 22 March 1903, p. 13.

38. I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* pt. 3, p. 215; *GM,* 21 December 1890, p. 1220.

39. *GM,* 23 November 1893, p. 1.

40. *GM,* 15 July 1906, p. 2; also 22 July 1906, p. 8.

41. For the development of nationalist organization in Surat before World War I, see G. J. Desai, "Surat under the Britishers," chap. 5; the files of *GM;* I. I. Desai, *Surat Sonani Murat,* vol. 1, pp. 208–24, and *Surat Congress;* Shirin Mehta, "Gujarat Politics on Eve of Congress Session of Surat, 1907," pp. 451–55, and "Social Background of Swadeshi Movement in Gujarat."

42. For example, *GM,* 24 April 1890, p. 385; 16 November 1890, p. 1099; 19 March 1891, p. 282.
43. *GM,* 13 September 1908, pp. 2–3.
44. *GM,* 23 November 1893, p. 1.
45. *GM,* 24 January 1909, pp. 6–7. Though he was one of the three notables who traditionally called public meetings, Edrus for some reason accepted the district association's effort (the two other notables did not).
46. "Collector's No. 2784, 6th October 1888," in BA, GD, 1889, vol. 124, comp. 351, p. 156.
47. For the development of the consultative form of the durbar, see *GM,* 29 August 1909, p. 2.
48. "Petition from Chandrashankar Bhimanand," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, pp. 177–79.
49. BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, p. 221.
50. "Petition from Chandrashankar Bhimanand," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, pp. 187–89.
51. "Petition from Prasanavadan Motabhai Desai and Others of Surat, 12 Sept. 1909," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, p. 41.
52. "Memorial from the Surat District Association, 26 April 1909," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, pp. 69–70.
53. "The Humble Petition of the President and Other Members of the Surat Cloth Merchants and Grain Dealers' Association Adopted at Their Meeting Held on the 28 Aug. 1909," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, pp. 95–97.
54. "Collector, Surat, to Commissioner, N.D., 4th Jan. 1910," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, pp. 360–61.
55. *GM,* 5 July 1908, p. 12; 25 October 1908, pp. 9–10; 3 January 1909, p. 3; 8 August 1909, pp. 95–97.
56. *GM,* 29 August 1909, p. 2. Obviously, such a statement carries with it the assumptions of English-educated men about the appropriate logic that should be used in the municipal-national arena.
57. *GM,* 5 August 1906, p. 6.
58. Compare BA, GD, 1885, vol. 96, pp. 65–66, with *SMR,* 1908–9, p. 155.
59. Voting qualifications were quite complicated. The two most important criteria were property worth more than 2,000 rupees or payment of more than 9 rupees municipal tax. Other criteria were payment of income tax or land revenue in excess of 40 rupees. In addition, educated voters could vote in an "intelligence," or "general," ward that selected three councillors. Qualifications included a university degree, a substantial salary or pension from the government, a title, etc.
60. *SMR,* 1895, pp. 89–90.
61. *SMR,* 1898–99, p. 71.
62. "Memorial from Iccharam Nagindas Vakil and Others 26 Feb. 1885," in BA, GD, 1885, vol. 94, comp. 351, p. 4.
63. Interview with Gordhandas Chokhawala, 1980.
64. Ibid.
65. *GM,* 18 March 1917, pp. 2–3.

66. "Petition from Prasanavadan Motabhai Desai and others of Surat, 12th Sept. 1909," in BA, GD, 1910, vol. 117, comp. 210, p. 41.

67. BA, GD, 1915, comp. 72, pp. 27–30.

68. For a somewhat different treatment of Indian politics acknowledging the use of multiple idioms by powerful men, see Morris-Jones, "India's Political Idioms," pp. 133–54.

69. *GM,* 10 September 1899, p. 10.

70. *SMR,* 1904–5, p. 40.

CHAPTER 9

1. So reported the collector in his speech at the annual durbar in 1914. See *GM,* 25 October 1914, p. 2.

2. "Collector's Report, 1913–4," in BA, RD, 1915, comp. 511, pt. 6, pp. 10–11.

3. *GM,* 9 August 1914, p. 16.2.

4. "Collector's Report, 1913–4," in BA, RD, 1915, comp. 511, pt. 6, pp. 10–11.

5. Jhaverchand's collapse is recorded in *GM,* 7 April 1918, pp. 7–8. See *TI,* 9 January 1917, p. 4, for conditions in the pearl market.

6. *GM,* 12 March 1916, p. 11; 19 March 1916, p. 6; 23 June 1918, p. 16.3; *TI,* 30 April 1918, p. 8.

7. "Collector's Report, 1916–7," in BA, RD, 1918, comp. 511, pt. 4, p. 11.

8. Ibid.

9. *GM,* 14 October 1917, p. 5.

10. *GM,* 5 January 1919, p. 5.

11. *GM,* 8 September 1918, p. 6.

12. *GM,* 5 January 1919, p. 5.

13. *GM,* 14 October 1917, p. 5.

14. Ibid.

15. For a discussion of new controls during the war, see Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* pp. 87–104.

16. *GM,* 18 August 1918, p. 16.2.

17. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* pp. 87–93; *GM,* 7 July 1918, p. 6.

18. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics,* p. 22.

19. *GM,* 26 May 1918, p. 3.

20. *GM,* 1 September 1918, p. 11.

21. For policy recommendations on Bombay municipalities, see *Report of the Special Officer on Local Self-Government in the Bombay Presidency.*

22. The passing of municipal bylaws in Surat City is discussed in BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379.

23. Patrick Geddes, *Reports on the Replanning of Six Towns in Bombay Presidency,* pp. 20–21.

24. *Administrative Report of Surat Municipality, 1917–1918,* in *SMR,* 1917–18, pp. 21–22.

25. "Collector, Surat to Commissioner, Northern Division 12 May 1913," in BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379, p. 13.
26. "Extracts from Proceedings of the Adjourned Special General Meeting of the Surat City Municipality held on 13th Mar. 1914," in BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379, pp. 51–53.
27. Papers relating to the new building regulations include BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379, pp. 15, 53–55; GD, 1916, comp. 862, pp. 57–58. The collector's quote is on p. 15 of the first reference.
28. "Collector, Surat to Secty. to the Govt., G.D., Bombay, 2nd Nov. 1914," in GD, 1915, comp. 72, p. 65.
29. Ibid., p. 33.
30. *SMR,* 1916–17, pp. 46–47.
31. "Collector of Surat, 4 Aug. 1916," in GD, 1917, comp. 653, p. 106.
32. *Administrative Report of Surat Municipality, 1917–1918,* in *SMR,* 1917–18, p. 13.
33. *Administrative Report of Surat Municipality, 1916–1917,* in *SMR,* 1916–17, p. 16.
34. *SMR,* 1915–16, pp. 139–40.
35. *Administrative Report of Surat Municipality, 1917–1918,* in *SMR,* 1917–18, p. 10; complaints against the imposition of meters on heavy water users may be found in BA, GD, 1917, comp. 661; on cesspool rates, see "Letter of Commissioner for City of Surat, 16 April 1918," in BA, GD, 1917, comp. 72, p. 10.
36. *GM,* 23 May 1915, p. 16.4.
37. *GM,* 8 April 1918, pp. 7–8.
38. For a little information on Desai's background, see *BC,* 8 August 1917, p. 8.
39. For criticism of the *mahajan*'s failure to respond to rising grain prices during the war by acting to forbid grain exports, see *GM,* 21 April 1918, p. 7.
40. *GM,* 21 April 1918, p. 4; *SMR,* 1918–19, pp. 19–20. Middle-income residents apparently avoided these shops because of a stigma attached to accepting charity.
41. *GM,* 1 September 1918, p. 5.
42. For the movements in Bombay and Ahmedabad, see *TI,* 3 August 1918, p. 7; BSPA, 1918, para. 1359, pp. 790–91.
43. *GM,* 1 September 1918, pp. 5–6, 11.
44. *GM,* 1 September 1918, pp. 5–6.
45. *GM,* 24 September 1916, p. 7.
46. *GM,* 26 November 1916, p. 20.2.
47. *GM,* 26 November 1916, p. 5.
48. *GM,* 30 November 1919, p. 22; 14 December 1919, p. 20.
49. *GM,* 4 January 1920, p. 3.
50. *GM,* 15 February 1920, p. 4.
51. Ibid.
52. *GM,* 30 March 1919, p. 18.
53. *GM,* 15 February 1920, p. 3.
54. Interview with Kumudbehen Desai, 1980.
55. *GM,* 30 March 1919, p. 18.

56. *GM*, 5 May 1918, p. 5.
57. *GM*, 23 March 1919, pp. 3–4.
58. For the role of *jnati* organizations in mobilizing middle-caste residents in Gandhian politics just after World War I, see pp. 242–43. Caste organizations among Golas, Khatris, Bhavsars, and Ghanchis again played important parts in the civil disobedience agitations of 1930–32.
59. For Mehta's support of the commissioner system, see BA, GD, 1917, comp. 653. The collector's comments are found in his letter, 4 August 1916, on p. 108 of this compilation.
60. "Petition of the Citizens of Surat as Represented by Their Elected Municipal Councillors, Mar. 1915," BA, GD, 1915, comp. 72, pp. 211–13.
61. *GM*, 11 February 1917, p. 7.
62. *BC*, 6 February 1917, p. 7.
63. Ibid.
64. *GM*, 18 February 1917, p. 2.
65. *GM*, 18 March 1917, pp. 3–4.
66. *GM*, 11 February 1917, p. 7.
67. *GM*, 25 March 1917, p. 2.
68. The text of this petition was printed in *BC*, 29 March 1918, p. 12.
69. *GM*, 18 March 1917, p. 3.
70. *GM*, 25 March 1917, p. 2.
71. *GM*, 14 April 1918, p. 2.
72. *GM*, 31 March 1918, p. 1.
73. BSPA, 1915, para. 404, p. 219.
74. For early Home Rule League politics in Bombay, see James Masselos, "Bombay City Politics in 1919"; "Statement Relating to the Disturbances in the City of Bombay," IOR, L/P&J/1650, file 839, 1920, p. 1.
75. Interview with Kunvarji Mehta, 1980; *BC*, 20 February 1919, p. 10.
76. BSPA, 1917, para. 899(r), p. 583.
77. BSPA, 1917, para. 559(g), p. 289.
78. *BC*, 20 February 1919, p. 10.
79. *GM*, 18 August 1918, p. 3.
80. *GM*, 11 November 1917, pp. 13–16.
81. *BC*, 20 February 1919, p. 10.
82. For numerous reports on meetings of Surat's Home Rule League, see BSPA and *BC* for 1917 and 1918.
83. *BC*, 27 April 1917, p. 5.
84. *GM*, 11 November 1917, pp. 13–14.
85. *BC*, 27 April 1917, p. 5.
86. *BC*, 19 July 1917, p. 6.
87. In 1919, before the law went into effect, as few as 40 percent of children between the ages of six and twelve attended school in middle- and low-caste wards. In some high-caste wards, by contrast, more than 80 percent of such children attended school. *SMR*, 1918–19, p. 140.
88. *BC*, 22 July 1920, p. 13.
89. *SMR*, 1919–20, p. 8; for evidence of objections to the primary education scheme, see *GM*, 10 July 1921, p. 7; 20 July 1924, p. 3.

CHAPTER 10

1. The most penetrating account of Gandhi's South African period remains Judith M. Brown's *Gandhi's Rise to Power,* pp. 1–15. More in-depth but analytically less satisfactory are Robert A. Huttenback, *Gandhi in South Africa;* and Maureen Swan, *Gandhi: The South African Experience.* See also Gandhi's own *Satyagraha in South Africa.*

2. For analysis of the novel, syncretic character of this philosophy, see Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence;* Indira Rothermund, *The Philosophy of Restraint;* Rudolph and Rudolph, "The Traditional Roots of Charisma," in *The Modernity of Tradition,* pp. 155–219. The most important psychological study of Gandhi is Erik Erikson's *Gandhi's Truth on the Origins of Militant Nonviolence,* while the most useful biography remains B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi.* A recent study of importance is Richard Fox, *Gandhian Utopia.* The quote comes from Gandhi, *Collected Works,* vol. 22, p. 404, and is cited in Rudolph and Rudolph, "The Traditional Roots of Charisma," p. 158.

3. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj,* in *Collected Works,* vol. 10, pp. 6–69. The quotes are from p. 15 and p. 16.

4. An excellent analysis of *Hind Swaraj* is Partha Chatterjee, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society."

5. See esp. Fox, "Gandhian Socialism and Hindu Nationalism," in *Gandhian Utopia,* chap. 5.

6. *Hind Swaraj,* p. 37.

7. For instance, ibid., pp. 27, 28–29.

8. Ibid., p. 39. For a more extensive analysis of the concept of *swaraj,* see Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi,* pp. 346–58.

9. Louis Fisher, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi,* p. 124.

10. For Gandhi's first visit to Surat, see *GM,* 9 January 1916, pp. 13–16.4, and I. I. Desai, *Muktinun Parodh,* pp. 98–121.

11. The lives of these three are well documented. For the Mehta brothers, see Kalyanji Mehta, "Ashramna Ekavan Varsh," pt. 2; Anil Bhatt, "Caste and Political Mobilisation in a Gujarat District," pp. 299–339; I. I. Desai and Ramnarayan N. Phatak, *Be Karmvir Bhaio.* A somewhat novelistic account of the brothers' activities is Babubhai P. Vaidhya, *Retima Vahan.* For Dayalji, see *Shri Dayaljibhai Smrutigranth.* Important for locating these men in the larger struggles of the region is Shirin Mehta, *The Peasantry and Nationalism.*

12. Interview with Bhailalbhai Patel, 1980.

13. For a sophisticated examination of the meanings of the terms *kanbi* and *patidar,* see David F. Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar.*

14. For these activities, see especially Bhatt, "Caste and Political Mobilisation," and Kalyanji Mehta, "Ashramna Ekavan Varsh."

15. Mehta, "Ashramna Ekavan Varsh," p. 6. The emphasis is mine.

16. *Patel Bandhu* 7 (1916), quoted in Bhatt, "Caste and Political Mobilisation," p. 302. The emphasis is Bhatt's.

17. Desai and Phatak, *Be Karmvir Bhaio,* pp. 62–68.

18. Shirin Mehta, *The Peasantry and Nationalism,* p. 73.

19. Kalyanji Mehta, "Ashramna Ekavan Varsh," p. 35.

20. Ibid.

21. BSPA, 1919, para. 1566(a), p. 1055; *GM,* 14 December 1919, pp. 13–14; *BC,* 20 December 1919, p. 15; 24 December 1919, p. 14; 30 December 1919, p. 5.

22. BSPA, 1919, para. 1520(a), p. 1029.

23. *BC,* 30 December 1919, p. 5.

24. See pp. 221–22.

25. BSPA, 1920, para. 1131(I)–(K), pp. 1150–52.

26. *GM,* 31 October 1920, p. 4; also 24 October 1920, pp. 10–11; *BC,* 19 August 1920, p. 14; BSPA, 1920, para. 1494, p. 1641.

27. *GM,* 7 November 1920, pp. 6–7.

28. *GM,* 20 February 1921, p. 4.

29. Ibid., p. 3.

30. *GM,* 27 March 1921, p. 16.

31. *GM,* 8 May 1921, pp. 16–17.

32. *BC,* 22 November 1921, p. 8.

33. *BC,* 19 December 1921, p. 5.

34. Desai and Phatak, *Be Karmvir Bhaio,* p. 98; *GM* files for 1921 and 1922; *Surat Municipality Administration Reports,* 1921–22; 1922–23; BSPA, 1922, para. 349(l), p. 382.

35. *GM,* 8 May 1921, p. 16.

36. Richard A. Brown, "Social Theory as Metaphor," pp. 176, 172; see also Robert Paine, "The Political Uses of Metaphor and Metonym: An Explanatory Statement," in *Politically Speaking.* Other important studies of metaphor are James W. Fernandez, "The Mission of Metaphor in Expressive Culture," and the essays in David J. Sapir and J. Christopher Crocker, eds., *The Social Use of Metaphor.*

37. Brenda Beck, "The Metaphor as a Mediator between Semantic and Analogic Modes of Thought."

38. Fernandez, in "The Mission of Metaphor," p. 121, suggests that those outside well-defined roles are most responsible for metaphor innovation: "There are always some men who feel more strongly their inchoateness and their painful positioning in quality space . . . they have the imagination to leap to other domains to obtain recompense and movement."

39. Even these customs were challenged in one public meeting when one noncooperator argued that the gathering dispense with the ritual of selecting a chair. *GM,* 10 June 1923, p. 8.2.

40. *GM,* 13 April 1919, p. 10.

41. *GM,* 10 July 1921, p. 11.

42. *BC,* 19 December 1921, p. 5.

43. *GM,* 10 July 1921, p. 9.

44. *GM,* 20 June 1920, p. 6.

45. *GM,* 30 January 1921, p. 5.

46. Kalyanji Mehta, "Ashramna Ekavan Varsh," p. 39.

47. *GM,* 9 August 1921, p. 15.

48. *GM,* 16 April 1922, p. 15; also 9 April 1922, p. 7; 26 March 1922, pp. 15–16.

49. *GM,* 4 June 1922, p. 13.

50. For these arguments, I am indebted to conversations with Geraldine Forbes. See also Maria Mies, "Indian Women and Leadership."
51. *GM*, 26 April 1925, p. 2.
52. *GM*, 3 October 1920, p. 15.
53. *GM*, 2 October 1921, p. 8.2.
54. See the discussion later in this section and in the following sections.
55. *GM*, 9 August 1921, p. 16.
56. Ibid.
57. *GM*, 10 July 1921, pp. 9–11.
58. *GM*, 9 August 1921, p. 16.
59. *GM*, 4 June 1922, p. 10.
60. Ibid.
61. *GM*, 20 June 1920, pp. 5–6.
62. *GM*, 10 July 1921, p. 9.
63. *GM*, 8 April 1923, p. 9.
64. *GM*, 23 April 1922, p. 13.
65. *GM*, 13 April 1919, pp. 5–6; 30 January 1921, p. 4.
66. *GM*, 23 April 1922, p. 14.
67. *GM*, 10 July 1920, p. 9.
68. For an exploration of this theme in Gandhi's own writings, see Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*, pp. 113–15, 228.
69. *GM*, 10 July 1921, p. 9.
70. *GM*, 11 June 1922, p. 12.
71. See BSPA, 1923, para. 314, p. 178; I. I. Desai, ed., *Raniparajma Jagruti;* David Hardiman, "Adivasi Assertion in South Gujarat," and *The Coming of the Devi*, chap. 10.
72. *GM*, 26 March 1922, p. 15.
73. BSPA, 1921, para. 584(5), p. 1019.
74. *GM*, 2 October 1921, p. 8.1.
75. *GM*, 9 April 1922, p. 6.
76. *Anavil Sevak*, September 1920, in Bombay Presidency, Native Newspaper Reports for the week ending 5 February 1921.
77. *GM*, 5 August 1923, p. 15.
78. *GM*, 23 July 1922, p. 17.
79. *GM*, 9 April 1922, p. 6.
80. This section could hardly have been conceived without the stimulation of the provocative essay by Shahid Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma." While Amin focuses on peasant perceptions of Gandhi, however, this section considers elite constructions of the Mahatma.
81. For instance, see *GM*, 16 October 1921, pp. 19–20.
82. *GM*, 2 October 1921, pp. 8–10.
83. *GM*, 2 October 1921, p. 8-1; this talk referred to the ideal qualities associated with each of the four *varnas* (divisions) of the caste system: the Brahmans (who performed the role of priests), the Kshatriyas (warriors), the Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (cultivators).
84. *GM*, 23 April 1922, p. 13.
85. *GM*, 23 April 1922, p. 14.
86. For instance, *GM*, 26 March 1922, p. 15; 23 April 1922, p. 13.

87. *GM*, 4 June 1922, p. 13.

88. Kalyanji Mehta, "Ame Satyagrahi Chela," in *Ladatna Gito*, ed. I. I. Desai, p. 43.

89. Interview with Kunvarji Mehta, Bombay, 1980.

90. BA, GD, 1920, comp. 1053, no page given; BSPA, 1920, para. 1131(U), p. 1160.

91. BSPA, 1921, para. 474(10), p. 763.

92. Kalyanji Mehta, "Hindna Banda," in *Ladatna Gito*, p. 54. For nautical imagery in Gandhian and devotional discourse, see Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma," p. 19. Amin in turn cites Susan Wadley, "Power in Hindu Ideology and Practice," p. 144.

93. *GM*, 11 June 1922, pp. 10–18; BSPA, 1922, para. 758(11), p. 726.

94. *Navayug*, 8 July 1923, in Bombay Presidency, Native Newspaper Reports for the week ending 9 July 1923, p. 542.

95. Ibid.

CHAPTER 11

1. For the municipal campaign, see *BC*, 7 April 1921, p. 9; *GM*, 27 February 1921, pp. 2–3; 6 March 1921, pp. 2–3; 13 March 1921, pp. 4–5, 18–19.

2. *GM*, 16 October 1921, p. 14.2.

3. *GM*, 13 April 1919, pp. 5–12.

4. *BC*, 30 December 1919, p. 5.

5. *GM*, 21 December 1919, pp. 13–15.

6. *GM*, 14 November 1920, p. 1.

7. BSPA, 1920, para. 1555(36), p. 1710; *GM*, 21 November 1920, p. 12.

8. *GM*, 21 November 1920, p. 12.

9. BSPA, 1920, para. 1555(36), p. 1710.

10. *Administration Report of the Surat Municipality*, 1921–22, p. 13.

11. Ibid.

12. BSPA, 1922, para. 569(9), p. 598; para. 28(4), p. 21.

13. BSPA, 1923, para. 25(6), p. 19.

14. BSPA, 1923, para. 1047(10), p. 682.

15. The analysis here is influenced by Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma"; and Chatterjee, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society." I have found only limited evidence in Surat of popular reinterpretations of Gandhi that defied elite representations. This may be owing to the presence of large numbers of Gandhians in Surat with direct ties to Gandhi, who were always ready to correct such "heterodox" developments. Of course, it may also be owing to the limitations of the sources.

16. BSPA, 1921, para. 461(12), p. 728.

17. BSPA, 1922, para. 193(11), p. 235.

18. BA, GD, 1920, comp. 1053, no page given.

19. BSPA, 1923, para. 28(4), p. 21; para. 119(2), p. 62.

20. *GM*, 25 October 1925, p. 1.

21. BSPA, 1923, para. 903(2), p. 600; *GM*, 20 May 1923, pp. 14–16.

22. *GM*, 19 August 1923, p. 4; 7 October 1923, pp. 9–12; 14 October 1923, p. 10; BSPA, 1923, para. 1898, p. 1280.

23. See, e.g., Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, p. 340.
24. *GM*, 9 September 1923, p. 4.
25. *GM*, 28 October 1923, p. 16.
26. BSPA, para. 2004(5), p. 1346.
27. Ibid.
28. *GM*, 14 November 1926, pp. 1–2.
29. The words are those of the editor of *GM*, 10 October 1926, p. 2.
30. *GM*, 18 November 1923, p. 8.
31. David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnad*, p. 96. The analysis also owes much to this work.
32. S. R. Bakshi, *Swaraj Party and the Indian National Congress*, p. 123.
33. *GM*, 23 March 1924, p. 13; *Bombay Legislative Council, Proceedings*, 20 March 1924, p. 1565.
34. *Bombay Legislative Council, Proceedings*, 21 July 1924, p. 100.
35. *BC*, 27 August 1924, p. 11; 23 October 1924, p. 11.
36. *GM*, 8 February 1925, p. 2.
37. For instance, *GM*, 12 April 1925, p. 3.
38. *GM*, 9 August 1925, p. 1.
39. Surat City Municipality, Municipal Proceedings, 27 July 1925.
40. Surat City Municipality, Municipal Proceedings, 2 October 1925; 9 October 1925.
41. Surat City Municipality, Municipal Proceedings, 18 January 1926.
42. *GM*, 15 November 1925, p. 1.
43. *GM*, 7 February 1926, pp. 1–2; pp. 8.1–16, 19, 20–22.
44. *GM*, 7 February 1926, pp. 10–11.
45. *SMR*, 1926–27, pp. 4, 28; 1927–28, p. 3.
46. *Administrative Report of Surat City Municipality*, 1927–28, p. 20.
47. *Administrative Report of Surat City Municipality*, 1926–27, p. 8.
48. *SMR*, 1925–26, p. 24.

CHAPTER 12

1. *GM*, 23 January 1910, p. 3.
2. *GM*, 10 November 1912, p. 13.
3. *GM*, 18 May 1913, p. 17.
4. BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379, p. 4.
5. Surat City Municipality, Municipal Proceedings, 29 September 1919.
6. BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379, pp. 42–43.
7. *BC*, 18 August 1920, p. 7; *GM*, 15 August 1920, p. 20; 29 August 1920, p. 16.
8. "Collector, Surat to Commissioner, Northern Division 14-10-1913," in BA, GD, 1914, comp. 1379, pp. 21–22.
9. *BC*, 21 November 1917, p. 5. Francis Robinson has distinguished between the politics of "young" Muslims and "old" Muslims in *Separatism among Indian Muslims*. He finds that the young Muslims came from social backgrounds similar to those of old Muslims and were distinguished from old Muslims mainly by their relationship to the British, their opportunities for employment, and their style of politics. In Surat, the new group of politicians who arose dur-

ing the war came largely from outside the families that had dominated Muslim politics in the city before the war. Not all the new activists, however, were younger than those who belonged to the notable families.

10. *BC*, 3 December 1917, p. 4.

11. *GM*, 14 October 1917, p. 3; *BC*, 1 August 1919, p. 10.

12. Richard Fox, writing on different Gandhian conceptions and drawing upon theoretical insights of the French literary critic Richard Terdiman, argues that the Mahatma's insights were in a "conflicted intimacy" with the pejorative understandings of India they were intended to counter. See Fox, *Gandhian Utopia*, chap. 5 and Conclusion.

13. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, vol. 15, pp. 201–3; vol. 18, pp. 327–28, 392; see also Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 10, pp. 28–32.

14. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, p. 194.

15. For instances, see Gandhi's speech on Khilafat at Bombay, 9 May 1919, in *Collected Works*, vol. 15, p. 297.

16. Arguments formulated in somewhat different terms but with similar implications are made in Ravinder Kumar, introduction to *Essays on Indian Politics*, pp. 11–16; and Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, p. 135.

17. Interview with Hafiz Mohammed Golandaz, Surat, 1980; BSPA, 1920, para. 1131(u), p. 1160.

18. *GM*, 21 March 1920, p. 4.

19. Ibid.

20. For instance, see BSPA, 1920, para. 596, III, pp. 494–95.

21. Gani Dahinwala, *Shvas-Uchchhavas*, p. 3.

22. *GM*, 21 March 1920, p. 4.

23. *GM*, 21 March 1920, p. 4.1.

24. *BC*, 2 March 1921, p. 13.

25. BA, HD, (Special), 1922, file 584-C.

26. Gandhi, in the *Independent* (Allahabad), 12 October 1919, quoted in Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, p. 296.

27. Gandhi, "Letter to Press," 10 October 1919, in *Collected Works*, vol. 16, p. 227.

28. *GM*, 19 October 1919, p. 7.

29. BSPA, 1919, para. 1397(f), p. 952.

30. BSPA, 1920, para. 549, IV, p. 437.

31. *GM*, 8 February 1920, pp. 9–12.

32. Interview with Gani Dahinwala, Surat, 1980.

33. *GM*, 21 November 1920, pp. 12–14.

34. For instance, see BSPA, 1921, para. 511(39), p. 864.

35. Collector of Surat, 4 October 1920, in BA, HD (Special), 1920, file 355(11).

36. For a fuller account of conflicts among the Bohras over control of community properties, see Haynes, "Conflict and Cultural Change in Urban India," pp. 344–53.

37. BSPA, 1920, para. 1653(26), p. 1788.

38. BSPA, 1923, para. 119(2), p. 62.

39. BSPA, 1921, para. 978(10), p. 1485.

40. BSPA, 1920, para. 596, II, pp. 494–95.

41. BSPA, 1921, para. 750(2), p. 1233.
42. "A Note on the Present Situation at Bardoli, Acting Superintendent of Police, Surat," in BA, HD, (Special) 1922, file 584-6, p. 311.
43. *GM*, 28 August 1921, p. 21.
44. *BC*, 25 August 1924, p. 9.
45. *BC*, 4 September 1924, p. 5.
46. *BC*, 3 October 1924, p. 9.
47. This paragraph has been influenced by Frykenberg, "The Concept of 'Majority,'" pp. 267–74.
48. BSPA, 1922, para. 1732(9), p. 1510; 1923, para. 665(12), p. 426.
49. *GM*, 8 April 1923, p. 16; BSPA, 1923, para. 665(12), p. 426.
50. The Mahasabha was originally founded in Surat in 1923. The association was apparently revived in early 1927, with Dr. Vora as its president and with members of its administrative committee including Prasannavadan Desai, Kanaiyalal Desai, and Chhotubhai Marfatia.
51. On Rayaji's writings and speeches, see IOR/L/P&J/6/1968, file 4041 of 1928; BA, HD (Special), 1927, file 566A(i), p. 103; BSPA, 1928, para. 9(9), p. 5; 1928, para. 39, p. 24; 1928, para. 1243(1), p. 501.
52. *BC*, 11 April 1928, p. 9. For an extensive treatise on Shivaji, see *Gandiv*, 1 May 1927, p. 4.
53. "Opinion of Inspector General of Police, 22 June 1927," p. 6, in IOR, L/P&J/6/1939, file 1113 of 1927, Document 1155-28.
54. For accounts of these events, see IOR, L/P&J/6/1939, file 1113 of 1927; *GM*, 8 May 1927, p. 21; *Pratap*, 8 May 1927, p. 3.
55. *GM*, 15 May 1927, p. 1.
56. *GM*, 8 May 1927, pp. 21–22.
57. *Pratap*, 15 May 1927, p. 2; 29 May 1927, p. 3.
58. "District Magistrate, Surat to Secty to Government, H.D., Bombay, 28 May 1927," in IOR, L/P&J/6/1939, file 1113 of 1927, p. 10.
59. *Pratap*, 8 May 1927, p. 3.
60. Even in Maharashtra, the Ganapati festival had only recently acquired a formal and political character; see esp. Cashman, *The Myth of the Lokamanya*, pp. 75–97.
61. BA, HD (Special) 1927, file 566A(i), p. 72.
62. Ibid., p. 53.
63. Ibid., pp. 74–75.
64. Ibid., p. 41.
65. IOR/P&J/6/1968, file 4041 of 1928, for accounts of the 1928 riots and events leading up to them.
66. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, p. 155.

CONCLUSION

1. The epigraph is from a speech by Gandhi to students and workers, Surat, 6 October 1920, in *Collected Works*, vol. 18, p. 330.
2. Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject."
3. For instance, David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnad*, chap. 3, for members of the Madras Congress during the 1920s. On Jawaharlal Nehru, see Bipan

Chandra, "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class, 1936"; Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru;* Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World,* pp. 131–66, esp. 151–57.

4. I paraphrase Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy,* p. xii.

5. Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom, eds., *The Philippines Reader,* esp. chaps. 2 and 6; Norman G. Owen, ed., *Compadre Colonialism;* Alfred W. McCoy, "The Philippines"; Peter W. Stanley, *Reappraising an Empire.*

6. "Address of His Excellency Manuel L. Quezon, President of the Philippines on Filipino Gratitude to the United States," Luneta, 13 August 1938. A copy of this speech is in the Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, N.H.

7. David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945;* R. B. Smith, "Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party in French Cochinchina, 1917–1930"; Hue-Tam Ho Tai, "The Politics of Compromise"; Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution.*

8. See esp. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial.*

9. These paragraphs have been influenced by Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture;* and Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone.*

10. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* pp. 137–38. My thanks to Gyan Prakash for pointing out this concept to me.

11. This analysis is influenced by Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History,* esp. chap. 4. I differ from Chakrabarty on a number of points, however.

12. See, e.g., Donn V. Hart, *Compadrinazgo,* esp. pp. 135–41.

13. See, e.g., Peter Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa"; Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria;* and Audrey I. Richards, *The Multicultural States of East Africa.* The quote is from p. 38 of Richards.

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GLOSSARY

Note: Words relating to Islam and Muslim communities are spelled according to the usage in S. C. Misra, *Muslim Communities of Gujarat.* Most definitions are drawn or adapted from Pandurang Ganesh Deshpande, *Gujarati-English Dictionary* (Ahmedabad: University Granth Nirman Board, 1974).

ābrū	credit, reputation.
agiyārī	Parsi place of worship, sometimes termed "fire temple."
ahimsā	nonviolence; noninjury to humans and other living creatures; a critical principle in the philosophy of Jainism and in Gandhi's thought.
Anāvil Brāhmans	a high-caste community of Brahmans living in South Gujarat, traditionally associated with agriculture and land ownership.
ashram (Gujarati, *āshram*)	a hermitage; for supporters of Gandhi, a center of the nationalist movement.
āvāhan	an invitation; invocation of the deity to be present and enter an image.
avatar (Gujarati, *avatār*)	an incarnation, especially of a deity.
bandobast	an order; in this study, that of a caste to enforce its moral injunctions.
bhajan	a hymn in praise of God.
bhakti	devotion, reverence; a Hindu devotional sect.
bhog	an offering made to a deity, an act of sacrifice.

Bohra (Gujarati, *vorā*)	a Muslim community known for its involvement in trade.
Brahman (Gujarati, *brāhman*)	the highest of four *varnas* in the caste system.
Brāhman-Vaniya	high-caste.
chelō	a disciple, follower.
da'i	the spiritual leader of the Daudi Bohras, also known as the "Mulla," or Syedna.
darshan	a viewing, particularly that of a holy man.
Davar	a title claimed by the head of the Modi family that refers to the family's supposed descent from Persian kings and its assertion of headmanship among Surat's Parsis.
dharma	duty; in Hinduism an obligation attached to one's caste, sex, or age.
dharmashālā	among Hindus, a rest house, especially for pilgrims; among Parsis, a sort of convalescent home for the sick and the elderly.
dokhma	"tower of silence"; a structure where Parsis leave their dead.
durbar (Gujarati, *darbār*)	under the Mughals, the emperor's court, an audience with the emperor. Under the British, an imperial ceremony, local or empire-wide.
general ward	an electoral ward of Surat reserved for educated persons and government employees and pensioners.
Ghānchī	a middle-status caste group, traditionally oil pressers by occupation.
Golā	a middle-caste community, traditionally rice pounders by profession. Now known as the *rānās*.
hartal (Gujarati, *haḍtāl*)	a business closing, a strike.
hūndī	a credit note, bill of exchange.
Jain	member of a western Indian religious community.
Jain Sangh	the organization of all Jains in Surat.
jarī	gold thread.
jnāti	subcaste, generally the outer limits of those with whom one could marry. But see chap. 4 and accompanying footnotes for a fuller explanation.

jihād	among Muslims, the religiously obligatory effort to defend Islam and to establish the rule of Muslims.
Kaṇbi	in Surat City, a middle-caste community, traditionally artisans or petty traders. In rural areas, a dominant agricultural caste (also known more prestigiously as Pātidār).
khādī	handspun, handwoven cotton cloth.
khalīfā	the spiritual and temporal leader of the Muslims; in India during the early 1920s, the term specifically referred to the Sultan of Turkey.
Khatrī	a community of Gujarat, traditionally involved in weaving.
Khilafat	the Indian movement to defend the *khalifa* (1919–24).
kinkhāb	an expensive cloth of interwoven gold thread and silk thread.
lāgo	a cess collected by an occupational *mahājan* for the support of religious charities.
lakh (Gujarati, *lākh*)	one hundred thousand.
mahājan	a merchant organization, a guild.
Mahajan Sheth	the hereditary head of the Samast Vanik Mahajan.
Mahābhārata	the great epic poem of Hindus.
Mahārāj	head of Vaishnava sect; in Surat chief spiritual leader associated with the temple Mota Mandir.
mān	honor, prestige.
mansabdār	a Mughal nobleman.
Memon	a Muslim community known for commercial activities.
Nāgar Brāhmans	a community of Brahmans in Gujarat, traditionally associated with government employment and the professions.
Nagarsheth	literally, the city *sheth* (or leading *sheth*); in Surat, the head of the Jain Sangh.
octroi	duties imposed by a municipality on goods imported into a city.
panch, panchāyat	the regulating organization of a Hindu caste grouping, theoretically one composed of five members.
pānjrāpol	a hospice for sick and aged animals.

Parsis	a community of believers in Zoroaster who migrated from Persia to western India around the seventh century.
patel	headman of a *panch.*
Pātidār	a caste grouping in Gujarat (see *kanbi* above).
peḍhī	a business firm.
prabhāt ferī	"morning round"; a procession taken by Congress volunteers early in the morning. Would usually involve the singing of nationalist songs.
Prajā Hit Vardhak Sabhā	"Society for the Advancement of the People's Welfare"; a public organization in Surat during the 1880s.
pratishṭhā	honor, prestige.
pūjā	among Hindus, a ceremony of worship.
purdah	among Muslims, the seclusion of women.
pūrā	a neighborhood in Surat, especially one outside the central core of the city.
Rāmchandrajī	the mythical hero of the *Ramayana.*
Rāmāyaṇa	one of the great Hindu epics.
Samast Vānik Mahājan	the Mahajan of all the Hindu Vaniyas in Surat (also known as the Hindu Mahajan).
sannyāsī	a Hindu ascetic.
satya	"truth"; an important Hindu concept, stressed heavily by Gandhi.
satyāgraha	literally, persistence in the truth; a nonviolent campaign of Gandhi.
satyāgrahī	one who engages in *satyagraha,* particularly one who accepts the entire moral code proposed by Gandhi.
sevā	devotional service, worship; in Gandhian usage, public work.
sharāf	shroff; a merchant of high status, especially a banker.
sharīf	"exalted"; usually refers to high-status Muslims, especially those claiming descent from immigrant Muslim families.
sheth, shethiā	a wealthy merchant; a headman of a caste or other organization; alternatively, any respected and influential individual.
Shia	one of two major sectarian divisions in Islam.

Sunni	the larger of the two major sectarian divisions in Islam.
swadeshī	"of one's own country"; used primarily in reference to campaigns against wearing foreign cloth.
swaraj, swarajya (Gujarati, *svarāj*)	independence; in Gandhian usage, personal self-control as well as an ideal state for India characterized by the absence of materialism and the fulfillment of personal needs.
tap, tapas, tapasyā, tapascharyā	penance, religious austerity.
tyāg	renunciation.
vahevār	social intercourse.
Vaishṇava	devotee of Vishnu, adherent to one of the two major sectarian divisions in Hinduism.
Vallabhācharyā	a Hindu devotional teacher of the late fifteenth, early sixteenth, century; alternatively, the religious sect that he founded.
Vāniyā (Hindi, *bania*)	members of a high-status caste grouping traditionally associated with commerce.

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